



WORKING DRAFT

Making Student Achievement the Focus:

A five-year action plan for District of Columbia Public Schools

As of October 2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Making Student Achievement the Focus: A 5-Year Action Plan for the D.C. Public Schools

There is broad agreement that DCPS is failing most D.C. children and their families. Despite pockets of excellence, the system's shortcomings are deep, widespread, and systemic. Less than 15% of our students meet nationally recognized standards of proficiency in reading and mathematics¹, placing D.C. last in the nation. Just over half of our students graduate from high school.

Many of our students face daunting challenges outside the classroom, but this cannot be an excuse for failure within the classroom – and it will not be.

We are acting to create a school system in which student achievement guides everything that we do. Our action plan takes into account the realities of our current situation and reflects input from throughout DCPS, as well as lessons from effective school district reform efforts around the world. This plan does not replace the Master Education Plan (MEP) developed by the previous administration of DCPS. It rather seeks to refine, define, and sequence the steps we are taking to achieve the lofty goals of the MEP—goals in which we strongly believe.

In short, we are going to make student achievement a reality across the D.C. Public Schools through a plan built around:

- ¶ An ambitious vision for success of our system and those it serves.
- ¶ Six interdependent strategies that will focus our energy and resources on that vision.
- ¶ The thoughtful and disciplined implementation needed to execute those strategies.

AMBITIOUS VISION FOR SUCCESS

We have two related goals: to create the best urban school district in the country and to close the achievement gap that persists along racial and socioeconomic lines.

In 5 years, our schools and our system as a whole will be much different – and much better. DCPS schools will offer engaging instruction, diverse programs, and specialty learning environments. School facilities will be safe, clean, and modern; and the centralized operations that support schools and learning will be efficient, transparent, and responsive. DCPS will attract high-performing educators, efficiently and systematically develop its people, reward

¹ National Assessment of Educational Progress (2006 - 2007)

performance, and not tolerate mediocrity. Curriculum, instruction, student assessment, and professional development will all be directed toward improving student achievement. An informed parent population will become a driving force for change and an integral part of our strategy for achieving excellence. Throughout the system, innovative partnerships will engage the broader community in increasing educational options for students and playing an active, cooperative role in school improvement.

All of this will translate into a dramatically different experience for students, teachers, and parents.



The experience of DCPS stakeholders will be dramatically different in 5 years




Students will...

- Expect a challenging, rich curriculum
- Be free of worry about “the basics” because schools will be clean, safe, and orderly
- Be fully prepared for graduation, college and work

Teachers will...

- Focus on the bottom line: student achievement
- Habitually analyze student assessment data to teach more effectively
- Value being part of a supportive and performance-driven culture that measures and generously rewards results

Parents will...

- Be change agents, pushing us towards continuous improvement
 - Understand their children’s academic milestones and know how to support success
 - Understand how to navigate and partner with their child’s school
 - Choose DCPS as the best option for their children
- 

SIX INTERDEPENDENT GOALS

Six goals, working in concert, will enable us to realize our aspirations for DCPS and those we serve.

- 1. Compelling Schools – Create schools that provide a consistent foundation in academics, strong support for social and emotional needs, and a variety of challenging themes and programs.** More than half of our schools are failing to provide a year's worth of learning in a year's worth of student time. Over the next 5 years, we will build a diverse portfolio of high-performing schools, all offering a full complement of academic and enrichment programs and wrap-around services that meet the needs of every student and work to attract families. We will do this by enhancing the quality of our school portfolio, ensuring accountability for school performance, making schools safer and more modern, and expanding our ability to meet the needs of students with special needs.
- 2. Great People – Retain the most highly effective educators in the country, and compensate them highly.** In today's DCPS, high-performing employees are unrecognized and unrewarded, and poor performers face no real consequences. We will build a system that identifies, hires, develops, and rewards passionate and talented people, and that holds every school employee accountable for performing his/her duties competently.
- 3. Aligned Curriculum – Implement a rigorous, relevant, college preparatory curriculum that gives all students meaningful options for life.** DCPS has not taken seriously enough its responsibility to help students build the basic skills that form the foundation for productive lives, let alone to challenge every student to achieve to his or her full potential. Going forward, we will align our curriculum, instructional materials and approach, assessments, use of data, and professional development toward clear and ambitious goals. Everyone in the system, including teachers, students, and parents, will know what those goals are and what their role is in helping us to reach them.
- 4. Data-Driven Decisions – Support decision-making with accurate information about how our students are performing and how the District as a whole is performing.** We have not used data on student performance to determine whether our students are learning and how best to help them. This is going to change, with stronger data systems and a new culture of using data to make decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels. We will use evidence to make decisions about how to help students learn, where to put our resources and how to manage our staff.
- 5. Effective Central Office – Provide schools with support they need to operate effectively.** Too often the central office has operated as though schools were there to serve it, rather than the other way around. The procurement process is inefficient, costly, and confusing; budgeting procedures are unclear and unmonitored; food service lost money and provided low quality meals. Moving forward, the central office will deliver on its sole duty of efficiently providing schools with the services they need to operate,

and teachers and students will be able to devote their time and energy to teaching and learning – the things that truly matter.

6. **Engaged Community – Partner with families and community members who demand better schools.** Historically, the DCPS organization has given priority to the interests of just about everyone but students and their parents – teachers, administrators, contractors, and elected officials have usually come first. We must clarify the shared responsibility of parents, students, and the community in increasing student achievement, and engage stakeholders in making our schools successful. We will do this by increasing student engagement in their academic success, building trust and mutual respect between DCPS and its families, equipping parents with the information to advocate for their children’s success, and pursuing partnerships with business and community organizations.

Interdependence of the Six Goals

The six goals, of course, work together. Successful engagement with local partners, for example, is crucial to creating well-performing, innovative, and safe schools, which in turn are crucial to attracting and keeping good teachers. As another example, it is impossible to properly measure, recognize, and reward teachers without the systems needed to measure their contributions to student learning.

THOUGHTFUL AND DISCIPLINED IMPLEMENTATION

Thoughtful and disciplined implementation is critical not only because of the plan’s complexity, scale, and admitted difficulty, but also to overcome the widespread – and potentially debilitating – cynicism created by failed reform efforts of the past.

The time to act is now, not only because we must, but also because our chances for success are higher than they have been in a long while. Our work thus far has been met with enthusiastic support throughout the District of Columbia community – local government, business and community groups, and parents. That support gives us both the momentum needed to undertake a comprehensive transformation plan and the foundation upon which to secure its success.

The DCPS 5-year action plan is a “living document” that will be revisited regularly as we learn what works and what changes we need to make. We at DCPS look forward to working with the Mayor’s Office, the Council, partners in the philanthropy and business communities, and, most important, families and students to ensure its successful implementation.

* * * * *

I. Compelling Schools

Five years from now, the experience of attending a DCPS school will be significantly different than it is today. Students will attend high-performing schools designed to build their base of academic skills, to meet their different needs and interests, and to challenge them to achieve to their potential. They will enroll in programs run in partnership with outstanding educational partners and with Washington's unique set of cultural organizations, government institutions, and businesses and non-profits. And they will sit in classrooms that are attractive, safe, and conducive to learning. In sum, students will attend schools that endow them with fundamental skills, challenge them with rigorous and varied curricula, and drive them to high academic performance.

To meet these goals, we will make significant changes to our schools and their operations. We will concentrate our efforts on enriching the school portfolio by aggressively improving underperforming schools, but also by expanding the best existing programs within DCPS and adding new programs to better meet student interests and needs. We will also focus on holding our schools to the highest performance standards; making our classrooms safe, orderly, and modern; and enhancing our efforts to reach special-education students.

This section begins with a brief discussion of where we are now on each of these objectives, describes our aspirations for moving forward, and outlines a set of initiatives we will undertake to fulfill our aspirations.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Student achievement in DCPS schools is overwhelmingly poor. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the reading and math skills of our fourth- and eighth-grade students are the worst of urban districts nationwide. At the high school level, only 43 percent of students who enroll as ninth-graders in DCPS schools or DC public charter schools graduate within five years; only 9 percent of that same cohort graduate from college within five years of matriculation.

At the same time, enrollment in DCPS schools is falling. We educated 13,000 fewer students in 2007 than we did in 2002. Over the same time period, enrollment in the District's charter schools grew by 9,000 students, to nearly 20,000.

The reasons why are clear. With a few notable exceptions, our schools are low-performing and do not provide compelling, rigorous academic programs to students and their families. Our schools are not held sufficiently accountable for results. They are neither safe enough nor modern enough. And they do not deliver the services that they should for students with special needs.

Specific challenges include:

- ¶ Our schools are low-performing and do not provide compelling, rigorous programs to students and their families

- Thirty-five DCPS schools (29 percent) are currently listed in Performance Improvement 5 (PI-5) status under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. An additional 15 schools (12 percent) are in PI-4 status, in line to become PI-5 schools by the end of this year.
 - Only seven of DCPS's approximately 121 schools offer specialized city-wide programs; among them, five are in Northwest Washington and two are in Northeast Washington, making them inaccessible to large numbers of the highest-need students in the District.
- ¶ Our schools are not held sufficiently accountable for results
- No single yardstick (e.g., a school "report card") exists to measure all schools in a uniform way.
 - Parents often make enrollment decisions for their children without sound and comparable information about school performance.
- ¶ Our schools are neither safe enough nor modern enough
- 72 percent of schools received poor or unsatisfactory facilities ratings in 2006.
 - More than half of teenage students in DC attend schools that meet the city's definition of "persistently dangerous."
- ¶ Our schools do not reach special-education students as they should
- About one of every five special-education students in Washington attends a private school, compared with one in 11 in Prince George's County and one in 27 in Montgomery County.
 - Because of DCPS's poor case management, the city has a backlog of over 1,400 students awaiting court-ordered closure of their special-education needs.
 - DCPS spends one-third of its budget on special education, primarily to cover the costs of students who choose to attend private and nonpublic programs and to handle lawsuits resulting from poor case management.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Given the challenges DCPS faces, we cannot simply *adjust* our school portfolio. We must essentially *remake* it. We will do so on four dimensions.

Enhancing the fundamental quality of our school portfolio. We will make changes to every DCPS school with one broad goal in mind: to ensure high student achievement occurs in every one of our classrooms. The way we approach these changes will vary by grade level, by school performance level, and ultimately by the strengths and interests of particular school communities.

- ¶ At the *elementary school* level and where needed at the *middle and high school* levels, we will focus on developing our students' essential skills, with the first priority on their reading skills, to the fullest extent.
- ¶ At the *middle grades*, we will focus on building a strong bridge between elementary and high school through building a positive culture, providing intensive supports, and challenging students beyond the basic level skills.
- ¶ At the *high school* level in particular, we will focus on meeting the range of our students' developing interests and needs through specialized and thematic programs to fully prepare them for college, work, and life.
- ¶ We will engage schools listed as *proficient* under NCLB in a cycle of continuous improvement, which will include enhancing our co-curricular and extracurricular offerings, providing thematic programs, and expanding higher level course offerings.
- ¶ We will engage schools listed as *underperforming* in one or more of the following four change approaches:
 - *Aggressive improvement*, which will include intensive professional development for teachers and intensive academic supports for students (e.g., Saturday school, extended-day programs, ninth-grade academies, tiered curriculum interventions).
 - *Reconstitution*, which will include hiring school turnaround leaders and new teachers to fundamentally change the culture of a school.
 - *Conversion* to a partnership school, which will entail handing the operation of a school to an educational partner, such as an Educational Management Organization, under a performance contract with DCPS.
 - *Closure*. We will close schools that persistently underperform, despite our efforts at aggressive improvement.

Within five years, our school portfolio will look significantly different than it does today. We will have a mix of high-quality neighborhood schools; we will also have city-wide schools that draw students from across the District. We will have schools that offer the traditional range of classes; we will also have schools focused on a particular theme. We will have schools that DCPS operates directly with excellent teachers and principals, and schools we will operate in concert with known and reputable educational partners. As a result, we will have students whose achievement levels will be markedly higher than they are today.

Ensuring accountability for performance. The ultimate success of DCPS's portfolio does not depend solely on its makeup. It depends on high performance. To that end, we will hold each school in our portfolio—regardless of whether it is a DCPS-operated school or a partnership school—to the same high standards. Schools that consistently meet or exceed these standards will earn curricular, operational, and staffing autonomy. Schools that consistently fail to meet accountability standards, despite our efforts to enable them to, will be held to the appropriate consequences—mandatory interventions, restructuring, or closure.

The result will be a system that encourages academic innovation and supports strong teaching. We will replicate successful academic programs and strong teaching models across the portfolio, and we will require less successful academic programs and teaching models to enact measurable change.

Making our learning environments safer and more modern. For students to achieve at their highest levels, and for teachers to perform at their best, facilities must be in modern working condition; schools must be safe and secure; and discipline problems must decrease. The culture of every school must be supportive and nurturing for students of all kinds. We will focus on each of these school-environment issues as we shape our portfolio.

Expanding our ability to meet special-education needs. Finally, we will accelerate efforts within DCPS to develop programs for special-education students, to train teachers to educate students with special needs, and to organize internally to better support special education programs. From both a financial standpoint and an educational standpoint, special education reform is among the most pressing issues DCPS faces. We treat it as a standalone section in this document—distinct from the main section on the portfolio—to emphasize its importance.

HOW WE’LL GET THERE

We will take specific steps to enact change on each of the four dimensions listed above:

Enhancing the fundamental quality of our schools. With nearly 30 percent of our schools currently in PI-5 (Restructuring) status and an additional 12 percent in PI-4 status, we will work diligently to ensure that school improvements occur consistently and are sustainable. We will build a school portfolio that meets a broader range of student interests and needs, and, in doing so, leads to meaningful increases in student achievement. Specifically, we will:

- A. *Close schools that are significantly under-enrolled.* At the end of the 2007-8 school year, we closed 23 of our most under-utilized school buildings. We did so to redirect resources to where they matter most: to improving the classroom learning experience, to engaging students more fully in their education, and to retaining more students within DCPS.
- B. *Determine how many schools will undergo each type of change, and which schools will undergo each type of change.* We will undertake a series of initiatives to help us determine, first, how many schools will undergo reconstitution, conversion, and aggressive improvements each year, and second, which schools will see each type of change. Specifically, we will:
 1. *Gauge our capacity to engage underperforming schools in aggressive improvement, reconstitution, conversion, and closure.* The Office of Portfolio Management, working with the Office of the Chief Academic Officer, will make these predictions annually, as part of the Quality School Review process. These decisions will focus on matching interventions with the particular needs of schools as determined through the Quality School Review process. Practically speaking, the decisions will also take into account three interdependent factors:

- *Human capital*: We will gauge how quickly we can recruit turnaround principals—as well as teachers with appropriate expertise—to reconstitute schools. We will also assess the skills of external operators to scale up quickly.
- *Cost*: We will examine our budget to determine how many reconstituted schools we can open year-to-year, and how many educational partners we can support to operate a portion of our schools.
- *Space*: We will determine how to most effectively leverage our existing space for reconstituted or partnership schools.

The outcome of these annual assessments will be a plan that defines the number of reconstituted schools and the number of partnership schools to be opened each year, along with the number that will undergo other aggressive improvements. As explained in more detail below, no schools will close for underperformance until we first engage them in an aggressive improvement phase.

2. *Develop principles of change for improving elementary, middle, and high schools*, and use them as guidelines for determining which specific schools should undergo each type of change. Those principles are as follows.
 - *Elementary schools*. Since our focus of change for elementary schools is on building our students’ essential skills, our change approach will in most cases focus on aggressive improvement, and particularly on intensive professional development for teachers. The best way to ensure that our students are building skills in a sound and consistent way is to ensure that our elementary curriculum is aligned with sound and consistent teaching methods, supported through intensive professional development. All teachers will engage in rigorous training and ongoing support with respect to reading instruction. With school-based coaches, we will engage in job-embedded professional development strategies, providing significant centralized support to the coaches. Our change approach will not be limited to professional development, however. We will also add pedagogically themed programs (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia) to some elementary schools, and will ensure that all elementary schools offer a broad curriculum that includes instruction in music, art, and physical education. And for elementary schools whose performance has been persistently poor, we will consider reconstitution or conversion.
 - *Middle schools*. Since 80 percent of our middle schools are in PI-4 or PI-5 status, we will consider reconstitution and conversion frequently. In concert, we will make a series of aggressive improvements at our middle schools. To create smoother transitions between elementary and middle grades, we will create a set of PK-8 schools. To create smoother transitions to high school, we will offer intensive academic supports to students (e.g., extended-day programs, Saturday schools, in-school tutoring). We will also offer new co-curricular and extracurricular programs to capture developing student interests.
 - *High schools*. With all of our comprehensive high schools in PI-5 status, we will consider reconstitution and conversion frequently, though on a staged basis.

In concert, we will make a series of aggressive improvements at our high schools. We will offer intensive academic supports to students (e.g., ninth grade academies, Saturday schools, summer bridge, in-school tutoring). We will also offer new co-curricular and extracurricular programs to capture developing student interests.

3. *Expand the Quality School Review process to evaluate every underperforming school in the District*, in order to determine which specific schools will undergo each type of change. In the 2007-8 school year, all schools in PI-5 status underwent QSR. During the 2008-9 school year, all newly identified PI-5 schools will undergo the review. Ultimately, all schools will be cycled through the process every 2 to 3 years. This process will use a consistent set of criteria, which will encompass the following elements:

- Teaching and Learning
- Leadership
- Job-Embedded Professional Development
- Resources
- Safe and Effective Learning Environment
- Family and Community Engagement

- C. *Begin improvement efforts across the school portfolio*. Once we determine how many and which schools will undergo each type of change, we will begin our improvement efforts as follows:

1. *Enact continuous improvements at high-performing schools*. We will enact continuous improvements at schools listed as proficient under NCLB. These efforts will include:
 - Supplementing current programming with additional high level academic courses and with a broader range of academic offerings
 - Adding extracurricular programs at secondary schools to engage student interests
2. *Enact aggressive improvements at PI-4 and PI-5 schools*. We will move with urgency to engage all PI-5 schools in aggressive improvement efforts, particularly those that will not be reconstituted or converted. We will move with the same urgency for PI-4 schools, in order to keep them out of PI-5 status.
3. *Expand aggressive improvements to PI-2 and PI-3 schools*. After we enact aggressive improvements at PI-4 and PI-5 schools, we will expand those improvements to PI-2 and PI-3 schools. This expansion is critical to lifting student achievement across the entire district—not just at the very lowest performing schools.

D. *Reconstitute and convert schools.*

1. *Reconstitute schools.* Barring capacity constraints, we will reconstitute eight PI-5 schools in SY2008-9 and an additional three to five in SY2009-10. Specific schools to be reconstituted will be identified by the QSR, as described above. All staff must reapply, with a cap on the percentage of current staff that may return. In some cases new turnaround leaders will be identified; in others existing leaders will have the opportunity to rebuild their faculty.
2. *Convert schools into partnership schools.* In 2008, three high schools entered a Phase One partnership year, with the full partnership being implemented in 2009-10. Specific schools to be converted in future years will be identified by the QSR, as described above.

We will undertake a series of steps in converting existing schools to partnership schools²:

- Begin the selection process for partners. We will use an open and rigorous design process to select partners to run partnership schools. Through this process, we will identify national and local partners already excelling at managing turnaround schools. These partners will receive priority invitations.
 - Develop criteria to guide the selection process. We will select partners based on a set of rigorous and uniform criteria. Partners will, e.g.:
 - . Maintain an average attendance rate greater than the DCPS average,
 - . Maintain an average graduation rate greater than the DCPS average, and
 - . Make consistent annual gains in student achievement on value-added growth measures.
 - Write contracts for selected partners that include expectations for performance.
 - Make physical improvements to schools that will be converted.
3. *Give partnership schools—and in some cases reconstituted schools—curricular, operational, and staffing autonomies, to allow them room to innovate in a collaborative cluster of autonomous schools.* Principals leading schools in this cluster will operate together with dedicated leadership from the Chancellor’s office, and will exercise significant autonomy in decisions regarding curriculum, instructional practices, professional development, and school operations. With this autonomy will come greater accountability, both to the Chancellor’s office and to the other principals in the cluster. Carefully built to include highly-

² The term “partnership schools” refers to schools that are operated by an external provider, such as an Educational Management Organization. In the section above, the “partners” to whom we refer are local institutions that would assist us in developing curricula and teaching methods for traditional, DCPS-operated schools.

effective principals at schools of varying performance levels, this group of leaders will provide intense support to each other, supplementing the support from the district.

E. *Introduce “theme” schools and programs centered around a curricular theme (e.g., STEM, fine arts) or a pedagogical theme (e.g., Montessori).* To determine how many will follow a typical academic model, how many will offer a curricular or pedagogical theme, and what themes we will offer, we will:

- Hold community meetings with students and parents to gauge interest in traditional programs versus themed programs, and to gauge interest in what types of themes might be appropriate for DCPS students
- Hold meetings with DCPS teachers from existing traditional programs and themed programs to assess our capability to expand and improve upon each model
- Survey the landscape of local public charter schools to catalogue the themed academic programs they offer, and to understand what gaps DCPS may fill with its own themed programs
- Determine which Washington-based organizations to collaborate with to create programs centered on curricular themes. We will open this process to a full range of potential partners (including government agencies, cultural institutions, local non-profits, and local businesses) instead of predetermining which specific partners to target. However, we will ensure that all potential partners meet a set of predetermined qualifying criteria. Criteria will include, e.g.:
 - An established reputation for knowledge contributions to a particular subject area
 - Subject-matter experts who are able and willing to devote significant portions of their time to classroom teaching
 - An ability to engage in a sustained commitment to DCPS, to change curricula and teaching methods as appropriate

F. *Close chronically underperforming schools.* We will close schools if they fail to show progress despite our efforts at aggressive improvement. More detail on consequences for persistently low performance appears in the next major section below.

G. *Create an Office of Portfolio Management to strategically manage the portfolio.* Key duties will include:

- Building internal capacity around existing programs in the service of short-term portfolio development.
- Building relationships with local institutions and potential operators of partnership schools and managing the selection process.

- Working with the Chief Academic Officer to design a mutually agreed upon set of metrics upon which the portfolio of schools will be assessed. With these metrics, we will evaluate whether the portfolio is meeting all student needs (primarily student learning) and interests. This will also require partnerships with the Office of Family and Community Engagement to survey parents and students about needs they see as going unmet.
- Working with the Chief Academic Officer to ensure that best practices are shared across the portfolio, both between themed schools and traditional schools and between partnership schools and DCPS-operated schools.

H. *Institute a Comprehensive Staffing Model.* This initiative will ensure that schools have a team of practitioners to provide what we have defined as a standard set of school offerings and services:

- Administrative Support (i.e. Principal, Business Manager, Registrar)
- Enrichment (i.e. Visual Arts, Music, Physical Education)
- Academic Support (i.e. Guidance Counselors, Literacy Coach, Math Coach, Media Center Specialist)
- Wellness Support (i.e. Social Worker, Psychologist, Nurse)

In the 2008-09 school year, the Comprehensive Staffing Model has been prioritized at schools that are receiving students from the 23 buildings that closed, and schools that are in restructuring. We will examine the results of the Comprehensive Staffing Model and the feasibility of rolling it out to all schools over a 2-4 year period.

Ensuring accountability for school performance. As noted above, diversity alone does not make a great school portfolio. High performance does. To ensure that our schools meet high accountability standards, DCPS will implement an Effective Schools Framework which will provide expectations for all schools in the district.

This framework will apply to every school within the DCPS system—schools operated by DCPS and schools operated by educational partners. The framework will provide the basis for an annual School Report Card, which will detail a school’s progress on a set of standard measures. *All* schools within DCPS must and will be held to the same accountability standards if we are to measure schools evenly, work to improve schools consistently, and reward and penalize schools uniformly.

Specifically, we will:

- I. *Evaluate our schools on a continuing basis.* We will:
 1. *Develop scoring criteria for all schools within DCPS, in communication with OSSE.* School success will be gauged using multiple measures (quantitative and qualitative). These measures will align to the goals of the district in the three broad categories below:

- Student Achievement: as measured by the growth and status of student performance using the DC CAS and other relevant measures.
 - School Environment: attendance and student/parent/teacher satisfaction as measured by surveys.
 - Parent and Community Engagement: as measured by parent surveys.
2. *Develop school report cards based on scoring criteria and grade schools on performance.* There will be consequences – positive and negative as appropriate – associated with school scorecard performance.
- J. *Enable our schools to achieve higher performance.* DCPS will create a binary system of autonomy to enable schools to achieve higher performance. Schools whose educational and teaching models are working will be rewarded with room to innovate further, while those whose educational and teaching models are less successful will be given tools to improve. Specifically, we will:
1. *Give schools that receive high grades on report cards varying degrees of curricular, operational, and staffing autonomy,* as follows:
 - Curricular autonomy. Though all schools within DCPS must adhere to specific, State Board of Education-determined educational standards, schools that innovate successfully in academics will be allowed to innovate further.
 - Operational autonomy. We will allow high-performing schools a degree of operational freedom (e.g., DCPS will support successful schools that want to begin new internship programs).
 - Staffing autonomy. Successful schools will be given additional freedoms in hiring and rewarding good teachers.
 2. *Engage schools that receive lower grades on report cards in continued aggressive improvement efforts.*
- K. *Establish rewards and consequences for performance.* We will incentivize continuously high performance and penalize continuously low performance. That is the only way to ensure schools strive for accountability standards. We will:
1. *Reward consistently high performance.* DCPS will consider the autonomy it gives high-performing schools a reward in itself.
 2. *Penalize persistently low performance.* Schools receiving lower grades will enter a cycle of change, receiving aggressive improvement support from DCPS for a period of time. The length of the change cycle will be shorter for partnership schools than for DCPS-operated schools, since partnership schools will run on a performance contract. At the end of their respective cycles of change, DCPS-operated schools still receiving low grades will be subject to closure. Partnership schools will lose their contracts.

Making our schools safer and more modern. Schools that are in good physical condition send a message to students that we value them. Schools that are safe allow students to focus on their education above all else. As we expand the school portfolio, then, we will:

L. *Work with OPEFM to ensure our facilities are in good physical condition and that the Master Facilities Plan meets our strategic goals.* We will work closely with the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPEFM) to ensure that school stabilization, school modernization, and work-order prioritization occur on an expedited timetable. We will also partner with OPEFM to ensure that the Master Facilities Plan is continuously updated to reflect our evolving strategic initiatives.

M. *Make our schools safer.* We will make our schools safer by enhancing our efforts both to prevent and correct disciplinary incidents. We will do so in three ways: by instituting clear rules and expectations for in-school behavior; by creating structures and supports to help principals, teachers, and students meet those rules and expectations; and by ensuring schools act quickly and effectively when those rules and expectations are broken.

1. *Institute clear rules and expectations for in-school behavior.*

- At the district level, we will revise the municipal regulations that establish processes for responding to serious student behavior issues, with an eye to increasing support for students. We will also outline conditions that must be in place at every school to ensure a safe and orderly environment.
- At the school level, every building will develop a shared a statement of rules and expectations tailored to meet those conditions set at the district level. Principals will be asked to:
 - Involve students, teachers, and parents in drafting this statement, to meet the challenges particular to his or her school.
 - Re-examine and update these rules and expectations at the beginning of each school year, again with a committee of students, teachers, and parents.
- Teachers will have flexibility to add rules for student behavior in their own classrooms as they see fit, given prior approval from principals and given that they reflect the school wide expectations.

2. *Create structures and supports to help teachers and students meet those rules and expectations.*

- For students, we will:
 - Create new adult advisory relationships. We will group all students into advisory cohorts at the secondary level, assigning each cohort to a school staff member. These adult advisors will act as mentors to students, checking in with them frequently on academic issues (e.g., their test preparation and scores, their post-high school plans) and personal issues.

- . Bolster Student Support Teams (SSTs) to coordinate academic and/or behavioral interventions for at-risk students (e.g., students who are academically not on grade level, chronically absent or truant, or at-risk for grade-level retention). SSTs are school-based committees that include administrators, general educators, counselors, parents, and other staff.
- . Provide alternative school settings for students whose needs are not being met in the traditional classroom. This will include Twilight Programs for over-age middle grades students and for high school students not succeeding in the standard school setting. It will also include alternative high schools where students can opt in to programs designed to engage youth for whom our traditional high schools are not working.
- For teachers, we will begin professional development programs aimed at:
 - . Increasing effective instruction, to keep students focused on and engaged in learning.
 - . Enforcing behavioral expectations for students that both model and require respectful interactions between all members of the school community.
 - . Increasing effective personal interaction with students (e.g., how to “speak to kids,” how to calm tense situations).
- For all teachers and principals, we will continue working to ensure that they have effective systems and structures in place to promote positive student behavior and respond to misbehavior.
- 3. *Ensure schools can act quickly and effectively when rules and expectations are broken.* We will act on two fronts to ensure this happens: we will enable teachers and administrators to respond more uniformly to disciplinary infractions, and we will improve the physical security of our schools.
 - For teachers and administrators, we will:
 - . Revise Chapter 25 of Title V of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, which governs student discipline at DCPS. In doing so, we will:
 - . Create a list of all student infractions, ordered from the most severe to the most minor, with specific corresponding consequences for each. We will devote specific attention to specifying why and for how long students may be suspended.
 - . Hold training sessions to ensure that teachers and principals are using the policies consistently.
 - . Ensure that school suspension is an educationally viable consequence for disciplinary infractions. Currently, our CHOICE program has limited capacity for suspended students; students suspended for less than a period of

approximately ten days often languish at home. To remedy this problem, we will:

- . Consider expanding the CHOICE program to include more seats.
- . Consider ending out-of-school suspension altogether, and opening suspension classrooms within each of our schools.
- From a physical security standpoint, we will work with the Office of School Security to:
 - . Enhance security technology within schools. We will do this by:
 - . Replacing aging metal detectors and x-ray machines.
 - . Adding additional security cameras to schools.
 - . Creating new monitoring centers at secondary schools. Currently, only a small handful of staff in DCPS's central office is responsible for monitoring the 3,500 surveillance cameras throughout the school system. Though principals have access to the video monitoring system, school surveillance is not their most pressing responsibility. By creating monitoring centers in particularly challenging schools, DCPS will be able to:
 - . Improve identification of and response time to security incidents.
 - . Potentially reduce security incidents, as students become aware of the the speedier identification of fights and violence and the enactment of consequences.
 - . Potentially reduce the number of security staff in schools, since monitoring centers will create a more efficient dispatch system for responding to disciplinary incidents.
 - . Hire experienced law-enforcement personnel to provide security to schools. These personnel will not be limited to current Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers or School Resource Officers (SROs). We will also recruit retired officials from various law-enforcement agencies across DC.
 - . Determine the correct number of law-enforcement officials to hire based on the success of our school-to-school monitoring and dispatch systems.
 - . Create closer coordination between the Office of Security and OPEFM, to ensure that new construction and renovations to old buildings are aligned with security interests (e.g., ensure that all windows in new schools are inoperable).

Expanding DCPS's ability to manage the needs of special-education students. DCPS's handling of special education is ineffective at best. We spend one-third of our annual budget on

special education; we incur especially high costs because case management is ineffective, often leading to costly lawsuits, and because special-education students often leave DCPS to attend private programs due to DCPS's inability or unwillingness to provide adequate services. This has left the city with large private tuition bills and ballooning transportation costs.

To draw students with special needs back into DCPS, we will significantly increase the number and quality of educational programs available to them. Special-education reforms within DCPS will also include better teacher training, better case management and compliance, and better internal organization to support new special education programs. Our reforms will align both with the December 2007 Blackman Jones consent agreement and with the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations.

DCPS is committed to ensuring that all students in the District of Columbia have access to excellent education. We are responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities are able to fully participate in school life. To achieve this, the Office of Special Education will:

- Ensure that every student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is updated, relevant, and provides avenues for students to be educated with non-disabled peers.
- Work with other DCPS departments and agencies to build early intervention services, foster positive, supportive school climates, and provide mental health services for all students.
- Attract, train and retain high quality teachers and service providers.
- Ensure compliance with outstanding consent decrees and IDEA.

The Office of Special Education has three guiding principles which will direct us in the years to come:

- *Excellent Education* - Students with disabilities get an excellent education.
- *Success* - Students with disabilities become successful adults, holding good jobs, living independently, and engaged in their community.
- *Inclusion* - Students with disabilities are educated in classrooms with their non-disabled peers and participate fully in school life.

In the next five years, DCPS will take the following necessary steps to improve special education within the District of Columbia.

School Year 1: 2008-2009

- *Transform the relationship between the Office of Special Education and schools* so that schools have maximum resources to provide excellent education to students within the District of Columbia. OSE will move from a provider of services role to that of a resource and expertise role, in which principals have ownership of programs and OSE is responsible for ensuring program quality. Accordingly, the OSE budget will be pushed from central office to the schools.
- *Comply with the Blackman-Jones Consent Decree* – OSE will develop a legal services unit in the Office of Special Education that is accountable for implementation of HOD/SAs and

early resolution of complaints. This will enable us to increase the number of staff dedicated to implementation of HOD/SAs and quick settlement of cases.

- *Pilot Exemplary School Programs* – We have launched 16 exemplary schools focused on highly supportive and integrated learning environments for students with disabilities and their peers. The Schoolwide Application Model (SAM) is in place at 8 elementary schools, providing differentiated instruction for students with and without learning disabilities in the same classrooms. Full Service Schools are functioning at 8 middle schools, providing wrap-around supports for students to support their socio-emotional needs.

School Year 2: 2009-2010

- *Reduce private placements and transportation costs* – Currently, special education transportation costs DCPS millions of dollars each year. By improving programs and returning students to their home schools, this will reduce both student placement and transportation costs.
- *Build excellent programs for children within the District of Columbia* – OSE will expand the SAM and Full-Service models to additional schools, which will establish highly supportive and integrated learning environments for students with disabilities and their peers.
- *Portfolio* – DCPS will develop a comprehensive profile of each school and determine the specific special education program needs at the school level. Then, using a mixture of DCPS-developed programs and public/private partnerships, the Office of Special Education will ensure that each school can leverage an array of services to help students receiving special education services participate fully in school life and be educated, as much as possible, alongside their non-disabled peers.
- *Establish excellent supports and training opportunities for teachers* – School staff will receive coaching and training to enable them to educate children consistent with these guiding principles.
- *Build confidence in DCPS for parents and families of children* – Parents are respected members of the IEP team whose insights and recommendations are valued. Parents will receive the support they need to participate as team members, including transportation, child care, interpreter services and pre-meeting briefings.
- *Response to Intervention* – This process includes the provision of systematic, research-based instruction and interventions to struggling learners. DCPS will use RTI to prevent the over-identification of special education students. RTI is designed as an early intervention to prevent long-term academic failure.

School Year 3: 2010-2011

- *Launch world class autism programs* – Our autism classrooms will be based on the principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and positive reinforcement. With the support of hands-on ABA Specialists and an evidence-based RTI curriculum, our students will be receiving top-of-the-line services. DCPS will also be expanding the program by developing Aspergers classrooms in various schools. The program will provide Theory of Mind/social skills intervention for our students with Aspergers.

- *Complete compliance with the Blackman-Jones consent decree* – The Blackman/Jones litigation alleges that DCPS has failed to implement hearing officer determinations and settlement agreements (HODs/SAs) in a timely manner in violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. In the ADR Agreement, the parties agreed on a backlog reduction plan designed to reduce the initial backlog (overdue HODs and SAs issued before 3/1/06) and the subsequent backlog (overdue HODs and SAs issued on or after 3/1/06). The Resolution Team has enhanced the initial Backlog Reduction Plan to include the use of investigators, quick settlements, and compliance case managers, who will work to implement all cases in a timely manner and to eliminate the backlog so that no cases are overdue.

School Year 4: 2011-2012

- *More inclusion for more students* – Students with disabilities will be educated and integrated with their non-disabled peers, across settings, across schools.
- *Higher achievement for students with disabilities* – Students with disabilities will demonstrate academic achievement in reading, writing and math due to systematic instruction based on the DCPS standards of learning.

TIMELINE FOR CHANGE

For the sequence of specific initiatives with the Compelling Schools focus area, see page 66.

II. Great People

Our people are critical to our ability to transform DCPS and improve student achievement. While DCPS has many talented, dedicated, and effective personnel, we need more—many more. Consequently, we must prioritize the recruitment, development, and retention of the highest caliber talent for our schools and central office.

A central tenet of DCPS’s approach to human capital is recognizing that there should be *different priorities for different groups at different times*. The strategies we use for principals, teachers, and central office staff ultimately need to have the same human capital elements, but certain reforms are more important initially to some groups than others. In this spirit, we have examined a broad array of best practice levers that schools can use to improve human capital and prioritized them across each group over years 1-5. The result is a compendium of strategic initiatives for principals, teachers, and central office staff:

- ¶ Principals: recruitment and professional development, including induction training focused on managerial/operational skills and ongoing coaching in instructional leadership
- ¶ Teachers: replacement of poor performers, improved induction, focused job-embedded professional development, career ladders, compensation, and evaluation
- ¶ Central office staff: evaluation and performance management, recruitment, and selection

We will transform the DCPS human capital system over the next five years. This document begins with a brief assessment of where we are with respect to these critical areas, outlines our aspirations for the future, and provides detail on how we will achieve our goals.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

In order to improve student achievement, DCPS needs to strengthen the human capital system supporting three talent populations: principals, teachers, and central office staff.

- ¶ **Principals.** DCPS must improve its systems for hiring, evaluating, and developing principals.
 - While DCPS has replaced approximately half of its principals over the last few years, there is still a significant need to bring additional leadership talent to the district.
 - Despite some gains in principal recruitment, DCPS still lacks a critical mass of leaders with instructional expertise and/or a proven track record of success in *turning around* low-performing schools.

- DCPS has no mechanism in place to identify and cultivate emerging talent within the district, which precludes us from efforts to “grow our own” leaders.
- DCPS needs to radically improve the hiring timeline for principals to ensure that new hires have the appropriate time to prepare for the school year. In 2007 DCPS had 20 schools without a principal three months before the school year began.
- While an evaluation system is currently in place for principals, it fails to put the focus on the bottom line—student achievement. Without this component there can be no meaningful evaluation of principal performance.
- Principals receive limited professional development on how to be instructional leaders.

¶ **Teachers.** DCPS must improve the induction, ongoing professional development, compensation, and evaluation of its teachers.

- DCPS has approximately 4,000 teachers. Of the 191 schools classified during the 2006-07 school year, only 42 schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reading and mathematics. Despite these results, only one teacher was removed that year for poor performance.
- There is no comprehensive professional development program for teachers. Professional development has not been systematic, nor aligned to the District’s goals.
- DCPS does not provide the resources, such as professional development, nor the compensation model, such as pay for performance, to enable us to recruit and retain the highest caliber talent.

¶ **Central office staff.** DCPS must clarify the roles and responsibilities of central office staff, as well as evaluate its performance.

- Work done in the central office is more costly and less efficient than comparable districts.
- Until last year, there was no regular evaluation of central office staff performance and no consequences for poor performance. There are no monetary rewards for high performance.
- Some central office employees lack a customer service ethic and may not understand their important connection to schools and student achievement.
- There has traditionally been no recruitment and selection strategy for central office staff. Often the District hired employees that were unprepared for work in administration.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

With our human capital strategy, we aspire to be a talent management model for other districts, with high-caliber people who are committed to and capable of improving student achievement. This is the vision of DCPS human capital we are working toward:

- ¶ A reliable, strong pipeline of principals who will receive relevant and rigorous professional development
 - Best-in-class recruitment, with the goal of seven high-quality principals for every vacancy and three qualified candidates “pre-approved” by the Chancellor for every community panel
 - A clearly defined career ladder that promotes and retains the best internal talent to the principalship
 - Evaluations that effectively assess principals’ strengths and weaknesses, providing a blueprint for professional development
- ¶ High-caliber teachers who are recognized and rewarded for their performance
 - Comprehensive professional development that provides teachers with differentiated training that is job-embedded wherever appropriate
 - A school year that begins with zero teacher vacancies
 - A performance-based compensation plan for individual teachers, as well as for schools
- ¶ An efficient central office staff that is held accountable for its performance
 - A performance-based accountability system driven by data from departmental scorecards and stakeholder satisfaction surveys
 - The reorganization of central office to support the performance-based accountability system

To ensure the success of our vision, we must have a clear understanding of how the many components of our plan fit together. In other words, there is a unifying, strategic coherence that drives the initiatives we lay forth. For example, differentiating between teachers by means of financial and non-financial performance-based compensation requires effective recruiting initiatives to maintain a strong pipeline of high-caliber teachers. DCPS will develop its recruiting capabilities in order to create sustainable strategies with respect to selection and induction. At the same time, these two initiatives depend on the quality leadership of our principals, to whom we will afford the autonomy to cull teachers based on a rigorous, accountability-driven culture. Understanding the interdependencies of our efforts will allow us to execute our initiatives most successfully.

HOW WE’LL GET THERE

What follows are the full set of strategic initiatives we will pursue for each of the three groups we will focus on within DCPS: teachers (including instructional aides, substitutes, etc), principals (including other school leadership), and central office staff.

A. Teachers

1. Remove poor performers

While DCPS has many dedicated and outstanding teachers, we have not focused enough in the past on hiring strong candidates or insisting on strong results. As a result, the overall quality of our teaching corps is unacceptably low. We believe that many of our poor-performing teachers have the basic skills and desire to improve, and will be able to do so through more intensive professional development programs focused on boosting student achievement.

But we also must face an uncomfortable reality: too many of our teachers are not up to the demanding job of educating our youth effectively. We therefore plan to identify and transition out a significant share of the teaching corps in the next two years. Some teachers will be “bought out” of their contracts, as described below. We will also aggressively exercise the option not to renew teachers who are in provisional status, ensuring that those teachers who are not performing effectively exit the system before they achieve tenure. Principals are being asked for the first time to systematically identify those provisional teachers who have not demonstrated the potential to grow into highly effective teachers.

Principals, who have the most accurate picture of classroom effectiveness, will be asked to play a central role in identifying low performers. They will also be given additional support in how to meaningfully evaluate performance and will have access to central “helping teachers” targeted at our lowest performers. We will provide workshops to make sure that principals understand the legal requirements of hiring and dismissal of employees. We will also clarify the incentives principals have for transitioning out poor performers, including school-based performance rewards.

We also recognize that we have an excess of paraprofessionals such as teachers’ aides. Poor tracking of these positions has allowed their numbers to grow without a clear sense of their necessity or value. We plan to reduce significantly the numbers of these positions, freeing up resources for initiatives with greater impact on student achievement.

2. Develop buy-out program to facilitate teacher exit

Our transformation will ask many teachers to fundamentally re-think their role. They will be asked to adopt new instructional approaches and to use data in decision-making in the classroom like never before. Some may not wish to make these adjustments and will prefer instead to leave DCPS. In recognition of this, we have developed a buy-out program calibrated to years of service. The buy-out offer was extended last spring to teachers at retirement age and those in schools that were closing or being restructured, as per NCLB. Approximately 350 teachers took advantage of this offer.

3. Enhance external teacher recruitment and develop “homegrown” teacher pipeline

Our recruitment engine must fill an unprecedented number of vacancies with a higher quality of candidate than in past years. Collaboration with the New Teacher Project is providing a strong pipeline of candidates, and we plan to expand that program. We will also maintain our strong partnership with Teach For America, which has provided many strong teachers over time. We also have reason to believe that if we are able to implement pay-for-performance, many more new teachers of the right mindset will be attracted to DCPS.

However, we can also do more to improve our selection mechanism to ensure the hiring of high-quality teachers. First, we must streamline certification to reduce the number of high-quality candidates who today are identified and selected but not ultimately hired. Second, we will initiate efforts to bring small cohorts of high-caliber teachers to DCPS, through, e.g., pursuing pension portability for out-of-state teachers so that they will not lose any accumulated benefits; recruiting high-performing teachers from local districts to work at new DCPS schools; and providing formal opportunities for new cohorts of high-caliber teachers to share experiences and best practices.

4. Develop dramatically improved compensation system

In collaboration with the Washington Teachers' Union, we plan to design an individual pay-for-performance compensation schedule based on quantitative and qualitative assessments of performance. While our teachers are evaluated annually already, those evaluations do not reveal meaningful difference in teacher quality, as the vast majority of teachers are given at least a satisfactory rating. Moreover, the assessments are based on a dizzying array of subjective criteria that do not place student achievement at the heart of the evaluation. To improve teaching performance, it is crucial to plant a performance mindset among teachers. And that performance mindset depends crucially on a clear signal of accountability: outstanding performance will be met with outstanding rewards, and less-than-outstanding performance will be rewarded less generously.

The design of pay-for-performance compensation system depends on a data system able to measure value-added student achievement. It also depends on designing qualitative assessments in the form of peer and parent evaluations of coaching, professional development, student engagement, and community outreach.

We will reward teachers with a greater performance-based bonus if they work in a high-needs school *and demonstrate their effectiveness* in those schools ("high-needs" defined by percentage of students on free and reduced lunch).

These individual-level bonuses will be built off of the success of school-level performance awards launched with great success in 2007. All employees—from the principal to the custodian—in schools that made outstanding gains in student achievement were rewarded with substantial bonuses, ranging up to \$10,000 for the principals and \$8,000 for the teachers. We plan to continue to reward schools (including all employees) for gains in proficiency on standardized assessments. To do this, we will increase the amount of the current TIF grant to further incentivize schools to improve student performance and apply for foundation funds for non-instructional staff bonuses. These school-level bonuses will continue to be implemented in 2008-09, and will possibly extend into future years, as our individual-level performance pay system ramps up.

5. Create comprehensive performance management system

A performance management system encompasses the tools that an organization uses to set expectations, measure the performance, and guide the professional development of its people. These tools include job descriptions, performance norms (including clear goals/deliverables for each employee), review and feedback processes, and the overarching performance expectations of the professional culture.

DCPS's current performance management system is inadequate, and the performance and development of its teaching professionals suffer as a result. Job descriptions are absent or too general. Performance norms are overly complex, insufficiently demanding, and in practice are infrequently used. Review and feedback processes rely almost exclusively on formal annual reviews without the more informal and frequent constructive criticism that can help improve day-to-day performance. Moreover, these reviews don't adequately distinguish excellent from poor performance—almost all teachers receive satisfactory ratings. Finally, performance expectations are not demanding enough, and DCPS provides insufficient support such as coaching or mentorship for teachers striving to meet high expectations of their own.

We plan to focus substantial energy on creating and rolling out these tools, making performance management a centerpiece of our plan to improve teaching quality. Not only teachers, but also paraprofessionals (such as teaching aides), substitute teachers, and others with direct responsibility for student learning will be incorporated. DCPS will develop and enforce a performance culture in part through meaningful semi-annual evaluations tied directly to performance scorecards, coupled with differentiated rewards and recognition.

We will build on best practices from other school districts and teacher organizations (e.g., Teach for America, The New Teacher Project), customizing them for the DCPS context. We will then use these tools to help develop the performance culture that is a hallmark of outstanding organizations.

6. Define and roll out career ladder to provide multiple advancement opportunities

A career ladder provides opportunities for outstanding teachers to grow, learn new skills, take on additional responsibility, and receive greater remuneration over time. The opportunity for recognition and increased responsibility can also serve to incentivize teachers to improve their craft.

We plan to create roles for experienced and effective teachers to share their expertise to help support the development of their more junior colleagues. These roles will include instructional leadership and mentorship programs and will be fully voluntary. These roles also provide a means of publicly recognizing and rewarding the highest-performing teachers.

Teachers may advance up the ladder based on years of experience, professional development, coaching hours completed, and, in particular, student performance.

7. Bolster induction programs and professional development focused on improving instruction

We will set higher expectations through a performance management system and mindset, and we will support our teachers in meeting those expectations through dramatically improved professional development opportunities. These initiatives will include:

- a. Improve our New Teacher Orientation/Institute for beginning teachers and develop and implement comprehensive training courses for first- and second-year teachers. All second year teachers will engage in the Skillful Teacher program. Key elements include self assessment, collaborative dialogue, and self-reflection.
- b. Re-purpose professional development resources to focus on intensive school-based coaching and mentoring on how to improve instructional practices. To bolster the teacher awareness and commitment to professional development, we will emphasize that professional development is about changing teaching mindset and behaviors – not just participating in workshops. To achieve this we plan to: i) create formal networking opportunities for teachers to build communities of practice across the school portfolio and develop their sense of professionalism; ii) identify and train school-based coaches to serve in a non-evaluative capacity to coach teachers in their classrooms; and iii) create professional learning communities within each school that focus on the work of teaching and learning to improve student achievement results.
- c. Ensure the sharing of successful educational practices across the portfolio. To help facilitate this dissemination, we will create a professional development website that stores and showcases best practices across the district, and establish regular forums to bring together teachers from different schools in the portfolio to share ideas.
- d. Launch an online system (“PD Planner”) by the beginning of the 2008-09 school year to track the supply and demand of professional development courses. We will support teachers in the use of the system to identify areas for improvement.
- e. Augment special education training for all teachers. In our effort to reduce the number of DCPS students being served in non-public placements, we must significantly increase the capacity of our general education teachers to effectively serve students with special needs. This must include professional development in differentiating instruction, as well as training in effective IEP parent-teacher conferences to increase consistency and successful placement. We will also use the SAM schools to promote inclusive instructional practices by training teachers to work effectively in inclusive classrooms (i.e., classrooms that include special education students and general education students).

B. Principals

1. Aggressively recruit experienced, proven leaders from external sources

Leading a school is an exceptionally challenging role, so attracting strong principals is a critical objective. Too few of DCPS’s current principals have experience leading successful school turnaround efforts, and too few are equipped with the operational and instructional skills that are core to their performance. We will therefore seek to attract strong instructional leaders with proven managerial and operational experience. This recruitment will begin by identifying high performers from outside of the DCPS system

based on networking in selected areas, national website postings, and non-local city papers. We will also work with principal development programs and foundations to recruit non-local candidates with strong leadership potential who reflect the local population.

2. Create a new DCPS School Leadership Academy

In order to equip principals with the core skills they will need to be successful school leaders, and in order to develop our own principal pipeline, we will open a School Leadership Academy. The Academy will train new principals through a series of simulated school projects that reflect the realities of the settings in which they will work. The induction phase of principals' training will focus on the basic operational and managerial skills needed to effectively run a school, as well as introduction of the school report card to which principals and their schools will be held accountable. On an ongoing basis, the Academy will provide additional training modules, with a focus on instructional leadership skills and exposure to experiences including observing, participating in, and leading teachers to improve classroom practice, using the Skillful Leader program.

The Academy will also ultimately provide training and certification opportunities for promising principal candidates from within and outside the system. We'll explore the possibility of partnering with regional universities after performing an audit of the quality of the program and alignment with DCPS curriculum.

3. Launch performance management system

As in the case of teachers, we will introduce a new performance evaluation for principals that reflects the priority on improving student outcomes. The evaluation will be aligned with the school report card.

4. Define and roll out career ladder

We also plan to create a career ladder for principals, with the same purpose and basic elements as that for teachers. The career ladder will help to promote new principal development pathways by initiating principal apprenticeship and mentoring programs for teachers and assistant principals. Outstanding principals may be promoted to "expert" status, rewarding them in financial and non-financial ways based on performance. We would also draw upon the group of outstanding current and past principals to teach at the new DCPS School Leadership Academy.

5. Enhance PD to focus on instructional leadership and data usage for instruction (see initiative 2, above)

6. Assess options for developing a pay-for-performance compensation system

In future years, we plan to explore the possibility of creating an individual pay-for-performance compensation schedule based on quantitative and qualitative assessments of performance. Elements could include:

- i. An increase in base compensation by \$5,000-\$10,000 for novice/beginning principals and \$15,000-\$20,000 for veteran principals (only applicable to those who opt-in to the pay-for-performance plan)
- ii. Quantitative data systems to measure value-added student achievement
- iii. Qualitative assessments that will take the form of peer and parent evaluations of coaching, professional development, student engagement, and community outreach
- iv. A greater performance-based bonus if a principal works in a high-needs school (“high-needs” defined by percentage of students on free and reduced lunch)

C. Central Office Staff

1. Launch aggressive recruitment

An assessment of existing central office hiring practices has revealed that we have not generated enough high-quality applicants for job positions in the past. This has created an opportunity to boost our marketing strategy. We plan to expand the scope of current hiring strategy to a variety of different job boards, not just the DCPS website. This outreach is designed to build talent pools for departments through targeted recruiting, for instance through web postings on popular and widely used job information websites, and advertisements in educational association news magazines. We will also explore the possibility of creating a Teacher-Central Office Administration Fellows program, rotating teachers on summer break into Central Office capacities.

2. Write clear, detailed job descriptions for all positions to align performance management and compensation

3. Create a performance management system that evaluates, develops, recognizes, and rewards DCPS central office staff

We began this process by administering performance evaluations to everyone in the central office, many of whom had not had any formal evaluation for years. The next stage of this process is to refine our evaluation tool to reflect simplified priorities that are aligned with our theory of change. We have developed the first iteration of this tool, and expect to continue to develop it. Coupled with the evaluation tool itself will be an ongoing professional development process with managers, norming the tool across the organization and equipping managers with strategies for effective conversations with staff about goal-setting and performance.

4. Assess and refresh compensation system

To enhance the attractiveness of coming to work at DCPS and boost incentives for good performance, we also plan to assess our current compensation structure with an eye toward developing a partial pay-for-performance system for central office staff. We expect to begin with a 10 percent bonus to reward the top 10 percent of performers.

5. Staff up critical central HR positions to create capacity

To support these ambitious and critical Human Resources aims, we need to upgrade and round out our central HR leadership. At the top of the list is hiring a top-tier head of Human Resources to lead recruitment and performance management.

TIMELINE FOR CHANGE

For the sequence of specific initiatives with the Great People focus area, see page 69.

DRAFT

III. Aligned Curriculum

Many of the challenges DCPS now faces stem from a diffused sense of purpose among those responsible for carrying out its goals. This problem is separate from the fact that talent and motivation are sometimes lacking in the district. Even the most talented, passionate, and hardworking people in DCPS can find their efforts made ineffectual when it turns out that another department has been working on similar ideas that are incompatible with theirs.

This is especially true when it comes to instruction. For example, teachers in DCPS are currently pursuing multiple approaches to the teaching of literacy, based on different and sometimes conflicting instructional philosophies, and reflecting different levels of training and experience with research-based practice. At best, this cacophony of instructional philosophies and practices makes it extremely difficult for DCPS to effectively support the work of instructional staff. At worst, many of our teachers and even schools are headed in a direction that lessens their chances of making the significant gains in student achievement. Without a shared understanding of instructional goals and effective practices, our schools' ability to serve our students is greatly diminished and our effort to support their work centrally is diluted.

The initiatives in this focus area are intended to create the alignment that can remedy this problem. In this section we take a closer look at what our academic vision is and what it takes to achieve our vision.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO: ALIGNMENT AROUND A CLEAR, FOCUSED, AND DEMANDING SET OF STANDARDS

DCPS's theory of change for alignment is that when instructional methods and materials, assessments, data systems, and professional development are designed to work in concert with, and in support of, a set of well-defined content standards, the instructional process in schools will be more effective and student achievement will increase. In the ideal case, these elements interact in a relatively straightforward way:

- ¶ The **content standards** contain a comprehensive description of what students should know and be able to do, for every grade and subject. These should be clear, focused, and reflect high expectations for student achievement
- ¶ The actual **instruction** that occurs in the classroom uses methods designed to enable students to master the standards, based on research-based methods, wherever possible
- ¶ **Instructional programs and materials** explicitly reference the content standards, and are designed to promote mastery of them
- ¶ **Assessments** are constructed such that they diagnose which standards students have mastered and which they have not, and are the primary source of data
- ¶ **Data systems** are built to track performance against standards, and are used by teachers to tune their instructional approach, down to the individual student level

- ¶ **Professional development** is used to familiarize teachers with the standards themselves, as well as to build their capacity to effectively use tools, assessments, and data in support of standards-based instruction

By aligning these elements, we simultaneously create a unified instructional philosophy based in research, and increase our ability to support the work of instructional staff through focusing our centralized resources.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

Our plan for achieving this vision begins with standards and proceeds by making the necessary changes to align the remaining elements with those standards.

A. Create tools to translate the content standards into standards-based instruction that is focused, and captures the high expectations DCPS has for its students

As outlined above, the content standards are at the center of the ideal, aligned instructional system and are therefore a good place for DCPS to place focus.

- 1) *Use DC-CAS as a foundation for the creation of pacing guides and other instructional tools aligned to the tested standards.*

Pacing guides are concrete tools that provide support to teachers in effectively teaching to the standards. School level coaches will work with teachers to use these support tools in a way that addresses specific student needs while ensuring progress toward the standard.

- 2) *Focus on early literacy and 3) Begin tiered reading interventions*

Although the upper grades and other subjects are important, a greater focus on early reading and writing instruction can be supported by at least three strong arguments. First, there is a relatively solid body of knowledge about what works in early reading instruction--instruction should be focused upon phonemic awareness, phonics and other key reading skills that lay a foundation for all students' reading by the third grade. Second, there is evidence that improved reading and writing ability has positive effects on a child's proficiency in other subjects. Third, improved reading proficiency could reduce subsequent special education referrals that are mostly based on reading difficulties.

The focus on early reading will be achieved by highlighting those standards that relate to fundamental reading skills, and prioritizing that subset of standards in each of the initiatives described below. DCPS has already identified a series of reading interventions that target particular categories of students, from those that need intensive intervention to those that need increased practice to accelerate progress. Teachers will be trained in identifying students who require the various levels of intervention and in utilizing the materials and instructional approaches effectively.

- 4) *Create a standard description of DCPS's graduation requirements, and which courses count toward them*

The District of Columbia Municipal Regulations set the requirements for students to receive a diploma from District of Columbia public and charter schools. The role of DCPS is to design

and implement policies and procedures to ensure students meet these requirements. Currently, the graduation requirements – including which courses fulfill which specific requirement – are not well understood by school counselors and students. As a result, schools have not consistently implemented the official course credit guidelines for fulfilling requirements, causing students to accrue credits in a non-standard way. This results in confusion about who is qualified to graduate and what courses students need to be scheduled for in order to fulfill their requirements. The costs of this confusion are substantial. Firstly, students who receive inaccurate counseling suffer directly insofar as they may graduate without the sufficient preparation to which they are entitled. Other students in the system suffer indirectly as well, as the reputation of a DCPS diploma is diminished by inconsistency. Finally, this kind of general disorder is disheartening to the system's best teachers, because the system they rely on to provide them with support is unable to offer even the most basic information they need to properly serve students.

Achieving this goal will require several steps, including:

- ¶ Revise and update the high school course catalog and produce an Academic Course Guide for students, parents and educators that clearly lays out what courses are offered in high schools and which courses fulfill specific graduation requirements. This information will also be available on the DCPS website and in the student portal of DC STARS.
- ¶ Publicize efforts to revamp the policies, procedures and guidance. Launch professional development to educate school staff.
- ¶ Develop consequences for school staff who fail to follow the graduation policies, procedures and guidance.
- ¶ Implement Individual Graduation Plans (IGPs) for all high school students, one component of which is an Individual Courses plan (ICP), where students in 8th grade map their full high school pathway to graduation. ICPs are to be updated twice yearly to account for any changes and ensure adjustment to future schedules.

Besides the time and resources required to do the work of cleaning up the graduation policies, procedures, and guidance documents, the largest challenge in this initiative will be to ensure that these policies, procedures and guidance documents become widely understood. Toward this end, the owners of this initiative in Curriculum and Instruction will need to work closely with the Professional Development Office, which coordinates staff education efforts, and the Office of Data and Accountability, where the information is captured.

B. Choose instructional methods and instructional materials that reinforce the standards

The Teaching and Learning office at DCPS will continue its work to codify the best ways to instruct students in mastering the standards. These best practices will be formally adopted by the district, and teachers at all schools will be introduced to them and expected to carry them out in their classrooms.

1) Adopt an instructional approach that is consistent and aligned throughout our schools

With few exceptions, schools across the district will adopt the same highly proven curricula and instructional programs and implement them with fidelity. Exceptions will be allowed on the

basis of “earned autonomy,” by which schools that have strong records of achievement may select alternative programs as long as the achievement record is maintained.

2) Adopt a common set of teaching tools throughout the system and ensure fidelity

Although DCPS has set programs for ELA and math (at the elementary grades it is Houghton Mifflin for ELA and Everyday Math), there appears to be wide variability as to whether schools are using these on a daily basis, let alone using them effectively. While it will be important to ensure effective alignment to the standards during our next cycle of textbook and program adoptions, it is perhaps even more important to provide the support and accountability structures to ensure fidelity to and effective use of the identified programs.

3) Track progress in implementing a standard set of instructional approaches rigorously and consistently across schools and classrooms

In concert with professional development programs, DCPS will track which instructional approaches are being used in each school, and monitor whether expected achievement gains are being realized. This continuous analysis will allow DCPS to ensure that the selected instructional programs are indeed effective. As the capabilities of data systems increase, monitoring will take place on the classroom level.

The Quality School Review is an important part of this process, and represents the first step in collecting the requisite data to understand where DCPS’s schools are in adopting the shared instructional philosophies.

C. Refine formative student assessments so that they map directly to the standards and provide effective diagnostic and formative data

Though DC-CAS and DC-BAS are (naturally) aligned with the DC-CAS instruction guide, teachers lack other aligned assessments to use during the school year to monitor student progress. In addition, students and their families have no means by which to gauge their own progress in mastering the standards. Lastly, the tools that teachers are currently using may yield inconsistent assessments for student work.

1) Promote an understanding of the content standards among students and families. Students and parents will have access to the content, ensuring that expectations for assignments are clear for students before, during, and after student output

Standards and assessments are the way that educational systems describe what students need to learn. These tools become more and more effective the more they are understood and shared. This fact extends beyond school staff to students and their families; when students and parents understand what is expected of them, they are better equipped to succeed.

However, giving families real access to assessments means more than simply publishing them on a website; assessments are likely to be incomprehensible without explanation. Therefore, this initiative ties to the efforts described in the Engagement focus area; one of the goals of parental outreach efforts will be to teach parents and students how to understand the standards, how to interpret test results, and what to do if the student is not progressing as he or she should.

2) Develop a set of benchmark, short-cycle, and end-of-term assessments with explicit reference to the DC-CAS standards for all reading and math-focused courses

Assessments can serve multiple purposes: to establish a baseline understanding of what students know at the beginning of the year, to measure progress at the end, and to provide mid-course corrections—in a non-punitive and non-evaluative way—for teachers and students along the way. DCPS will develop and make available distinct assessments for each of these purposes. In order to allow these assessments to work together, they will all be tied back to the DC-CAS standards.

These assessments will be tied to specific courses, so that every student will be measured with respect to every class that she or he takes, which is particularly helpful in grades and subject areas not currently tested by DC-CAS.

- 3) *Revise report card system for elementary school grades to ensure that they are standards-based and comprehensive; launch electronic report cards*

Sparked by a group of teachers who recognized the difficulties in the current report cards, this effort will overhaul the report card system such that students, parents, and teachers can easily understand any student's status with respect to mastering the content standards. Electronic report cards will allow schools to escape the burden of keeping large cumulative files for students, which are usually badly organized, often incomplete and easily lost.

D. Use data to inform instruction, in part by using benchmark assessments and short-cycle assessments that teachers can use to continuously improve their teaching practices

The vision for use of assessments requires IT systems that, at the moment, do not exist. Chief among these is a student information system that can be used to track a student's progress from year-to-year and school-to-school. In addition, this ideal system would be able to produce an academic snapshot for any school, department, or classroom, showing how the progress of that unit compares to its peers. Building this system will need to be done in close collaboration with the owner of initiatives in the Data-Driven Decisions plan.

- 1) *Align data systems with content standards in the core academic subjects*

A data system is only as useful as what's contained within it; this initiative is meant to ensure that, in addition to storing information like student grades, attendance, the system is also able to track the progress of a student in mastering the standards (or, conversely, the success of a teacher or school in teaching the standards).

- 2) *Continue to improve the implementation and effectiveness of the benchmark assessment program (DC-BAS), with the goal of creating a thriving benchmark assessment system that supports and informs quality instruction*
- 3) *Make available tactical data on student achievement to teachers, who will be trained to adjust their day-to-day instructional practices based on the strengths and weaknesses that the data reflect*

These two initiatives are the technology-focused counterparts to initiative C3 above. The IT systems being designed must be able to produce useful reports that serve the purposes laid out in C3. For example, having a rigorous yearly benchmark test is one of the two requirements for being able to calculate a teacher's annual "value-added" (the other requirement is the year-end test—in this case the CAS—that is used in concert with the benchmark to gauge the progress made that year). This work has already been initiated. Initiative D3 will ensure that the data

generated by the short-cycle assessments mentioned are collected, and that teachers will be able to easily pull this information from their classroom computers. Unless data collection and access is made trivially easy, the value of developing excellent short cycle assessments will be severely limited because no one will use them.

- 4) *In the short term, use data from DC-CAS results to develop targeted interventions aimed at moving schools out of NCLB performance improvement status*

DCPS's long-term vision is to use data to inform all instructional practices, and to have as the main goal the broad objective of lifting student achievement throughout the district. However, in the near term, it makes strategic sense to focus attention on those schools and students that have been identified as not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) according to NCLB.

We will comb the DC-CAS results and determine which students at which schools should be targeted first in order to lift schools out of needing improvement according to NCLB. Principals and teachers at those schools will develop programs to work with those students that are aligned with the broader alignment strategy described in this document.

- 5) *Expand the use of the DIBELS early literacy assessment*

Given the critical importance of identifying reading difficulties early and responding quickly, all K-3 teachers will utilize the DIBELS assessment to identify children at risk for reading failure and focus in on the particular skills they need to develop. Through the use of handheld devices, teachers can easily track students' progress over time and effectively follow up on an individual basis.

- 6) *Develop end-of-course tests in core content areas at the high school level*

To ensure consistent high standards across the district, we will develop assessments to gauge student achievement of rigorous academic objectives beginning with algebra and biology, and expanding to other core content areas.

E. Create professional development programs that support teachers in understanding the standards and other elements of the strategy

Current professional development efforts are not tied to any unifying goal or philosophy. They tend to be one-off, isolated programs with no follow-up. Furthermore, PD programs often do not incorporate the findings of research that indicates that the best way for adults to learn is through repeated coaching and peer feedback, as opposed to through receiving presentations.

Each of the elements of the alignment strategy will require dedicated PD time to familiarize teachers with the model. This work will be done largely by the Professional Development office.

- 1) *Focus instructional professional development on Scientifically-Based Reading Research*

Reading research has identified five essential components that must be included in any reading program:

- ¶ **Phonemic awareness**—the ability to identify the individual sounds in spoken words

- ¶ **Phonics**—knowledge of the relationships between the letters of written language and the phonemes sounds of spoken language
- ¶ **Fluency**—the ability to read a text accurately and quickly
- ¶ **Vocabulary**—knowledge of words and their meanings, both in spoken and in written form
- ¶ **Comprehension**—the ability to make sense of written text

For the reasons described in initiative A3 above, these elements should be the highest priority educational goals. Professional development programs will be developed to help teachers familiarize themselves with these elements. These PD programs will allow teachers to learn and practice instructional approaches that enable students to master the skills.

- 2) *Ensure that all instructional PD is explicitly linked to the content standards*
- 3) *Follow-up formal programs with coaching and job-embedded professional development around use of content standards*
- 4) *Create continuous coaching program on data-driven inquiry*

References to the standards will be worked into all professional development efforts over time. There is a full professional development plan that includes plans for building a coaching program that uses data-driven inquiry.

- 5) *Develop model lesson guides. Share common assignments*

Where possible, successful lesson plans should be developed and shared through professional development programs. Coaches are naturally suited to do this. They visit different classrooms, identify what's working well, share with each other, and share back to other teachers, thus cross-pollinating classrooms with the best ideas.

F. Develop a shared understanding of how to measure performance across the district

With the widespread interest in accountability and outcome measurement, it is natural that several departments within DCPS have started projects to build accountability systems. This is encouraging, and evidence of the energy within the organization to live up to the responsibility to serve students well. However, it is crucial that these efforts are aligned with each other. For example, the indicators that are sought after in the Human Capital office to identify high-performing principals must be compatible with the evaluations being performed by the Quality School Reviews as well as the objectives of the professional development program for principals. Achieving harmony among the various efforts begins with building an understanding of what is already being done in the district.

- 1) *Conduct a comprehensive survey of performance measurement efforts*

This effort has already been begun by the Data and Accountability office. Once this survey is complete, the process to bring all performance measurement efforts together can take place.

- 2) *Convene district leaders to agree on a standard definition of performance for various groups of stakeholders within the district*

- 3) *Create and launch programs to disseminate the standard definitions of high performance so that disparate accountability projects are aligned*

TIMELINE FOR CHANGE

For the sequence of specific initiatives with the Aligned Curriculum focus area, see page 71.

DRAFT

IV. Data-Driven Decisions

Five years from now data will be used throughout DCPS, in all activities, to make informed decisions on how to better educate our students. Data will be at the fingertips of principals, teachers and parents in the form of easy-to-understand, actionable information. Armed with this information, teachers will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student and provide tailored instruction to meet each of their needs. School leaders will know which instructional programs and professional development courses are most effective and are the best investment of their resources. Parents will log-on to the web-accessible system to access school and student information and will be better equipped to provide their children with support and be involved in their education. And data will be used to hold DCPS staff accountable to the high standards we will set for student achievement.

We will reach this goal by focusing on three objectives: develop a clear accountability system at schools which is aligned with accountability systems throughout the rest of DCPS; develop and upgrade our student information and assessment data systems and then integrate them with other key data systems (e.g. HR, finance) in a data mart; and provide supports to transform this data into actionable information that teachers and school leaders can easily use to improve student achievement.

What follows is a discussion of the current state of the DCPS data and accountability systems, a description of our aspirations for the future and an outline of the initiatives we will carry out to reach our vision. Following this, a timeline is presented to show when we will undertake each initiative over the next five years.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

In the summer of 2007, there were 30 individual data systems at DCPS. These systems communicate poorly with one another and the sparse data that is collected is often of poor quality. Furthermore, the data systems lack automation, and performing useful analyses, when possible, is extremely time consuming.

Without the proper tools to perform data-based decision-making, DCPS lacks the ability to perform many key functions. For example, schools and their instructional staff are not held accountable for the success of their students since insufficient data is available to evaluate them. In addition, the effectiveness of instructional programs is unknown and thus best practices – and importantly, ineffective practices – cannot be identified. Even those analyses that can be performed require considerable effort and time. As an example, in order to assess the truancy rate in schools, an analyst must sort through over a thousand pages of output from the DC STARS student information system, pull out individual summary sheets spread throughout the report and type in all data by hand into a spreadsheet to enable analysis. This takes days to perform and must be repeated every month.

Given the critical nature of data in driving accountability and its enormous potential to inform instruction, we have concluded that we must:

- ¶ Have a broad aspiration for our data and accountability systems: DCPS must cultivate a culture of data gathering, analysis, and fact-based decision-making and problem solving in support of increased student achievement.
- ¶ Design the comprehensive data system needed to achieve that aspiration – a system that gives disciplined attention not only to how DCPS gathers and processes data but also to ensuring that people understand and use that information to improve student achievement and their own performance.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO: DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING TO ENHANCE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

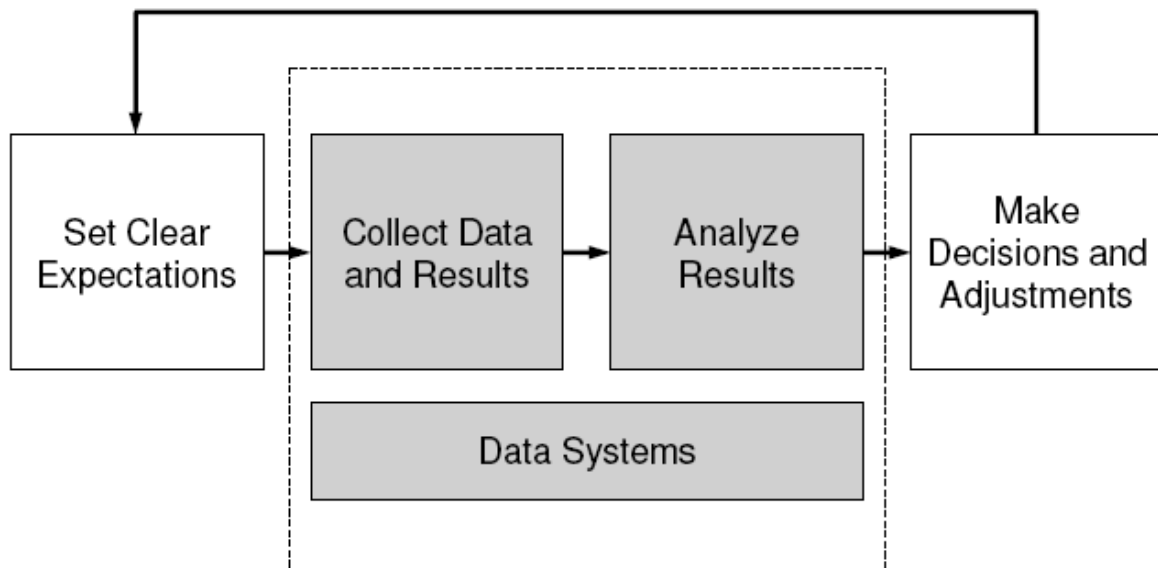
DCPS will use data to inform student instruction and decision-making, monitor the performance of individual schools and DCPS staff, and analyze resource allocation. To do this we first must bring our data systems to a level at which we can, at minimum, meet our accountability obligations. This includes submitting mandated data reports to state and national education agencies and other funders. Achieving this requires clarification of AYP accountability rules and communication of them to stakeholders involved in data collection and analysis. Once we have reached this baseline level of capability, we will then build the capacity to support data-driven decision-making by designing and implementing the ideal data and accountability systems that DCPS will use going forward. Importantly, these data systems will be efficient by incorporating a high level of automation and will provide information to all users in a manner that is easy to understand and actionable.

Data can be used in two ways to enhance student achievement. One way is to use assessment data to directly inform instructional choices. Our vision is that all school instructional staff will use data continually to make better-informed decisions on how to support student learning. This aspiration comes alive when we consider the following examples of how data will be used throughout DCPS:

- ¶ Small groups of teachers regularly meet to review student data and share techniques. By comparing the results from a common assessment, they determine that one of them is most successful in meeting a particular objective. In the following days the other teachers observe this instructor's class and integrate the successful methods into their own lessons.
- ¶ A principal analyzes formative assessment data and identifies several students who are struggling in math. He modifies their schedules to place them into a separate intensive math course before they fall any further behind.
- ¶ DCPS collaborates with the research community to assess the success of its students in post-secondary educational institutions. They determine that relative to students from other districts, DCPS graduates – even those that excelled in secondary school assessments – do poorly in certain math courses. Researchers determine the areas of weakness in the DCPS secondary school math instruction and DCPS high school math curriculum and instruction are modified accordingly.

- ¶ Parents log on to the DCPS website and obtain information about the types of programs offered at nearby schools and their performance track records. Having this data, they choose an appropriate school based on their preferences and the specific needs of their children.

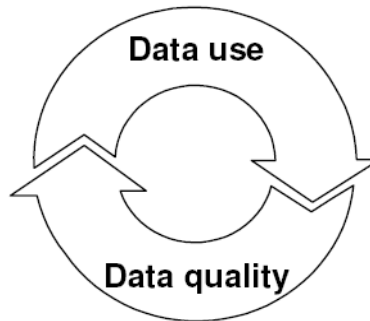
DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING AND ACCOUNTABILITY



The second way data can be used to improve student achievement is to hold teachers, principals and schools accountable to high standards. The collection and analysis of data – enabled by the data systems – is the engine that drives this accountability process. Data allows for transparent evaluation of performance against the expectations that have been set. Thus, using data, we will be able to identify those schools and school staff that are not living up to our expectations, and take the appropriate action to correct the situation and enhance student achievement.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

Over the next 5 years, we will be creating the comprehensive data system needed to achieve this aspiration of a culture of data-driven decision-making. As noted earlier, that system will give disciplined attention not only to how DCPS gathers and processes data but also to ensuring that people understand and use that information to improve their own performance and enhance student achievement. We will build the data and accountability systems by engaging all stakeholders in the process. Developing methods to ensure the collection of accurate and reliable data will be a critical step. Then we will enable data use by providing all stakeholders with the appropriate training and by making data easy to use with customized dashboards and simple reports.



It is important to note that data use promotes the collection of higher quality data. Schools that use data to drive decision-making have a vested interest in ensuring that the data is accurate and reliable.

In order to achieve our goal of creating a data system to lay the foundation for improved instruction and accountability, we will carry out the following three objectives:

A. Design and implement a coherent, clear accountability system

1. Lay the foundation for the aligned accountability system

- Set expectations at all levels within schools (e.g. teachers, principals, counselors, schools); develop a set of metrics at each level and clear targets
- Identify and assign responsibility for delivering metrics; this will include developing efficient data collection and reporting systems, which is described in the next objective
- Develop scorecards based on the expectations set; scorecards will be used as a simple tool to show performance in each metric relative to the target
- Design performance evaluation forms that are informed by the scorecards and summarize overall performance
- Define a set of actions to address shortcomings if expectations are not met, and reward excellence if expectations are exceeded
- Develop performance evaluation meetings as a setting to review performance and make appropriate decision on actions to take

2. Revise and improve the accountability system

- Continually revisit expectations and consequences
- Refine the accountability tools (scorecards, performance evaluations, data systems) to make the system more efficient

B. Place high-quality information at the fingertips of the DCPS community

1. Define the set of critical data that needs to be collected to evaluate and accelerate the progress of students and schools

- Engage top DCPS instructional leadership in identification of top data needs
- Based on these discussions, generate the list of the critical data that must be collected
- Prioritize data needs and develop a timeline for data availability

2. Clean the current student data set and ensure proper data collection going forward

- Assess the accuracy and consistency of the student data and collaborate with stakeholders at schools to determine the root causes of data errors
- Provide all stakeholders at schools with professional development on good data collection methods and written protocols that establish the proper method of data collection; this includes ensuring the confidentiality of student information
- Where necessary, equip schools and the central office with the proper IT infrastructure to enable accurate and reliable data collection
- Require schools to generate reports in which the accuracy of each piece of student information is determined, and necessary changes are made by school staff, and have principals sign off on the validity of the data in the reports
- Provide intensive professional development to school staff to increase the use of the student information system (DC STARS); this will ensure that more staff are inputting accurate student data into the system

3. Develop and upgrade the student information and assessment data systems and create a simple, customized portal for data access

- Identify and engage key users of data; this list includes school leaders, teachers, central office staff and leadership, students, parents and other outside parties (e.g. research community, foundations, community leaders); based on discussions with key stakeholders, determine the required set of analysis and reporting capabilities needed for each user
- Work with technical consultants to perform a diagnostic analysis of the current data systems and determine their ability to provide the required functionalities (either as is, or with improvements such as additional modules)
- Take steps to implement the comprehensive data system, either by expanding and improving upon on DC STARS or purchasing a new system from an external vendor
- Upgrade the IT infrastructure at schools to enable teachers and principals to access the data system; this requires a networked computer in every classroom

- Create computer-based tutorial programs that school and central office staff can use to familiarize themselves with the use of the data portal and its reports
- Create a single portal through which principals and teachers can access all data systems
- Create data dashboards that are customized to each user group (principals, teachers, etc); these user-friendly interfaces will provide each group with targeted information to enable data-based decisions to improve student achievement
- Create electronic elementary report cards in DC STARS
- Provide parents with online access to a system that allows them to stay informed about the ongoing performance of their child
- Provide parents with information about each school to allow them to make informed decisions about which school to place their child in and have a better understanding of the school's performance relative to others

4. Develop a data mart to integrate the student, HR and finance data systems

- Data driven decision-making should extend beyond classroom-level instructional decisions to include broader cost benefit analyses of the various programmatic approaches across the district. We want to be able to answer such questions as which professional development programs result in the most significant and efficient change in student outcomes, or which sources of new teachers are producing our most effective teachers. All critical DCPS data will be integrated into a user-friendly data mart, which will put relevant, fresh, analytically useful information into the hands of DCPS decision-makers.

5. Improve the data mart and expand the number of DCPS data systems that are integrated

- Building the data mart will be a process that requires ongoing integration with systems from within DCPS and other agencies, including the Student Longitudinal Education Data (SLED) warehouse being developed by OSSE. We will work ongoing to ensure we are not reinventing systems but rather are maximizing the other systems that exist or are in development.

C. Provide supports to transform data into actionable information

1. Provide all staff with materials and training to empower them to effectively use data to advance student achievement

- Disseminate written materials that define the basic use of data; include information on how to access and interpret reports, how to access additional data and whom to contact to for assistance
- Provide ongoing professional development to teachers and principals on how to access data on the systems and how to use that data to inform student instruction

2. Establish teacher “data leads” at each school as peer mentors

- Collaborate with schools to identify teachers who are experienced in using data to inform their instruction
- Enlist these teachers to become “data leads”; they will have the responsibility of mentoring others at their own schools in individual and small group settings
- Provide these school “data leads” with additional professional development on the use of data and how to mentor others

3. Create small teacher groups to provide support in the use of data

- Teachers in each school will be divided into small teacher groups across subject type
- These small groups will regularly meet to share experiences in data-driven decision-making and to help one another in using data and developing inquiries which identify improved instructional practices

4. Analyze data to evaluate the effectiveness of school programs

- Come to a consensus on the data analysis needs with top DCPS instructional leadership. This will likely include value-added evaluations of professional development and instructional programs
- Prioritize the data analysis requests and perform a needs assessment to ensure that the appropriate data is collected in a manner that facilitates analysis
- Hire additional data analysts within the Office of Data and Accountability to meet the analysis needs
- Create processes to ensure communication of research findings and implementation of successful programs and practices identified by these analyses

5. Actively engage the research community to help determine what schools, programs and specific practices enhance student achievement

- Create streamlined, legal data sharing protocols that will give outside researchers access to DCPS data while maintaining student privacy
- Generate an initial set of key research questions and engage the research community in answering them
- Create roles within the Office of Data and Accountability to oversee the recruitment of researchers, perform collaborative data analysis and communicate the research findings to the DCPS community to improve performance

TIMELINE FOR CHANGE

For the sequence of specific initiatives with the Data-Driven Decisions focus area, see page 73.

DRAFT

V. Effective Central Office

In five years, the DCPS central office will be transformed from its current state. The budget will be balanced and sufficient funds will go to each school to ensure that they are clean and well maintained. Teachers will get the classroom supplies they need and will get them quickly. In short, the central office will deliver on its sole duty of providing schools with the services they need to operate, and teachers and students will be able to devote their time and energy to teaching and learning – the things that truly matter.

To achieve this goal we will focus on improving four key central office functions. We will overhaul procurement processes so that supplies get to schools more quickly and at lower cost. We will enhance the efficiency of food services and improve the quality of school meals. We will bring more discipline and structure to financial planning to ensure that the recent budget deficits are not repeated again. In addition, we will develop performance management systems to ensure that central office staff is held accountable and that the strategic initiatives in this document are successfully carried out.

As each of the four central office functions is quite distinct, what follows is a description of the current state, desired end state and strategic plan for each of the functions **individually**, rather than collectively. At the conclusion of this section, a timeline is presented for carrying out the initiatives in all four areas.

A. Improve efficiency and reduce costs in procurement

While rarely a top priority for school districts, procurement is a critical central office function. It is especially important for DCPS given the budgetary constraints we currently face and the host of programs we plan to institute to improve student achievement. Under these challenging circumstances, we have determined that we must work to fundamentally transform purchasing processes to decrease costs and provide supplies and services to schools more quickly and with less effort. Accomplishing this transformation will require significant effort on the part of all parties: customers (school and department leaders), the Office of Contracts and Acquisitions (OCA) and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO).

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Procurement at DCPS is currently an extremely inefficient process. The key stakeholders (customers, OCA and OCFO) do not work in harmony. As a result, significant time and money is wasted. What follows is a list of some of the major problems.

- Due to failures on the part of both contract specialists at the OCA and customers at schools and the central office, contracts are not monitored effectively.
- Purchasing of many supplies is not centralized or standardized, resulting in significant waste by not taking advantage of catalogue systems and aggregated

spend. For example, until very recently, textbooks were ordered by each individual school through individual vendors.

- School and department leaders have inadequate knowledge of how to use procurement systems. Thus they experience frustration and waste both money and time (both theirs and that of procurement officers in the OCA).
- There is a pervasive ongoing practice of schools and programs entering into contracts with vendors without proper approval from the OCFO.
- There is inadequate procurement planning performed at schools and central office departments, which often leads to overspending.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Our vision is to transform the procurement organization into one whose primary goals are to provide better support to schools and to lower costs. To do this we will need to shift the mindset of all central office procurement staff to one that continuously strives to improve processes, provide better customer service and lower cost – total cost of ownership rather than simply purchasing cost. To do this we will also need to institute simplified and standardized procurement processes, effective data systems and rigorous governance procedures for contracts. DCPS customers will play their part as well. School and central office leaders will perform better financial planning by developing spending plans and instituting accountability systems to ensure correct purchasing procedures. By making these changes, we will significantly improve the experience of customers at schools. They will receive supplies more quickly and with less hassle. This will allow them to devote more of their attention to the students.

HOW WE’LL GET THERE

To achieve this transformation, DCPS will undertake the following seven initiatives:

1. Create a high-quality procurement team

- Identify gaps in the current capabilities of the procurement team
- Strengthen the skills of existing staff with focused training; while detailed procurement policies exist, more training is needed to ensure that they are put to practice
- Develop the capabilities to perform total cost of ownership (TCO) analysis; rather than focusing on only the purchase price, contract specialists will also consider shipping, warranty, internal business costs, etc. in vendor analysis
- Create a culture of data-driven decision-making within the OCA
- Consider the feasibility of developing mandatory procurement rotation programs in which staff from other business units are assigned to purchasing
- Consider bringing in procurement leaders from neighboring school districts for short stays to share and implement best practices

2. Aggregate the spend to lower costs

- Generate a list of the top 50 purchases throughout DCPS
- For each of the top purchases, determine the number of vendors used and the size of the contract for each vendor
- Based on this diagnostic, identify opportunities (e.g. where fragmentation exists) and prioritize them into several categories
- Assign and deploy teams to develop sourcing strategies for individual supplies/services, starting with high priority items
- Institute clear procurement codes with policies for vendor negotiations including TCO analysis

3. Increase automation of procurement processes to reduce lead times

- Develop e-catalogues in PASS for current commodities that have long term contracts; these catalogues will automate the purchase of many supplies
- Further identify processes that can be automated, standardized or performed more efficiently and develop strategies for accomplishing this

4. Create an electronic contracts database to facilitate more efficient management of contract awards

- Develop the contracts awards database that contains all contract information
- Include functionality to enable searching/sorting of contracts and generation of custom reports
- Develop protocols for using the database and updating it with new information; train stakeholders on how to use the database
- Enhance the contracts awards database by adding functionality to automatically send e-mail alerts to customers and contract specialists when contracts are about to expire

5. Improve customer understanding of how to create spending plans and use procurement systems, and enforce accountability

- Create and distribute written policies and guidelines for the use of various procurement systems; there is currently a lack of understanding of the policies (and how they affect vendor selection) and lack of knowledge of the estimated lead times for receipt of supplies
- Identify the root causes of the lack of customer proficiency in using procurement systems
- Create cross-functional teams to provide targeted training to school and program leaders based on this analysis; the trainers will be from both the OCA and OCFO

and will train customers on how to develop spending plans and how to properly use PASS and other procurement systems

- Create a customer service desk at the OCA that will provide schools and departments with information on the status of their orders and general help with the purchasing process

6. Institute stricter policies for approval of contracts and enforce accountability

- Examine the current purchases and identify ones that were improperly processed (i.e. goods or services received without proper approval and written contracts)
- Continue the ratification process for authorizing payment for these goods and services that were received without valid written contracts
- Create processes to ensure that the proper approval process is followed and that the costly and wasteful ratification process is avoided; this includes training customers at schools and the central office on the proper approval process for contracts and holding them accountable; this also includes creating punishments for those who do not abide by these rules

7. Improve use of the AmEx BDA program

All schools have been equipped to participate in the American Express Buy Down Account (BDA) Program, which enables individual schools to purchase common school and office supplies on the internet. Those participating in the program report that most orders arrive within 48 hours. However, customers still don't fully understand how to properly use the program and participation can be expanded.

- Provide school principals and business managers with additional training to use the AmEx BDA program. Specifically, customers should receive training on the process for setting up an account through PASS at the beginning of each year and for submitting receive reports to free up funds for each purchase.
- Continue working with the existing AmEx BDA vendors to add local distributors

B. Enhance the efficiency of Food Services and the quality of school meals

DCPS will increase efficiency in Food Services by improving processes both at schools and the central office. The goal is to turn Food Services into a self-sufficient program that no longer relies on a local subsidy. More importantly, DCPS will upgrade food quality and increase student participation since good nutrition is essential to learning.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The Food Services division at DCPS has been a troubled system faced with a multitude of challenges. Many families that qualify for free or reduced meals fail to fill out applications and food quality is poor. Thus student participation has been low, particularly at secondary schools. To compound this, there have been inadequate systems at schools for tracking participation rates, and the processes at the central office for submitting reimbursement claims were inefficient. As a

result, the food services division operated at a loss of over \$8 million annually. Furthermore, the quality of the food received low marks from students and families.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Food quality and student participation will increase and the food services program will be financially self-sufficient. Additionally, we will implement Provision II in all schools over the next several years. Provision II is an option in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program that allows us to offer free meals to all students. Under Provision II, the amount of paperwork involved in monitoring participation is reduced, lowering administrative costs.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

1. Implement Provision II in schools

- Work with OCTO to repair the computer infrastructure and install point-of-sale devices to accurately track student participation and accommodate the requirements for Provision II.
- Improve the reimbursement process by upgrading the technical infrastructure at the central office and instituting a rigorous auditing process to ensure the accuracy of reimbursement claims.
- Implement Provision II to reduce the reimbursement application and verification requirements and cut administrative costs.
- Increase the number of free and reduced meal forms submitted by parents by launching an information campaign to make them aware of their qualification and of the enrollment process.

2. Upgrade the school kitchen infrastructure and revamp food offerings

- Work with an external vendor to upgrade school kitchens with new equipment and to redesign the menu. Enhancing food quality will enable us to increase student participation.

C. Bring more discipline and structure to financial planning

We seek to reverse the wasteful practices at DCPS by establishing responsible budgeting procedures. In doing so, we can ensure that sufficient resources reach schools and that there is adequate planning for funding of the transformation initiatives.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Due to present limitations, budgeting is currently performed year-by-year. This means there is little ability to do planning for long-term programs, let alone effective strategic planning. The limitations that currently preclude multi-year financial planning are:

- An ineffective payroll data system: up to 80% of individual payroll entries are inaccurate and there is currently no ability to track employees as they switch jobs within DCPS
- Inadequate level of budget forecasting within each department and at schools
- A host of issues that must first be resolved in the current budget

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

DCPS will be a model of fiscal responsibility, ensuring that funds are directed at student instruction. To enable this we will have an accurate payroll system that accounts for each DCPS employee. Each department and school will perform budget forecasting together with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO). With multi-year financial forecasts in place, we will be in a better position to plan for and carry out our long-term strategic initiatives.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

We will achieve our goal of improving the budgeting processes at DCPS by carrying out the following three initiatives:

1. Upgrade the HR payroll system

- Implement the PeopleSoft HR management system and train HR staff to use it.
- This includes updating all payroll records to accurately reflect who is working in each department.
- Develop processes within HR to accurately collect and update payroll data using the PeopleSoft system.

2. Resolve issues with the current budget

- The OCFO must first get ahead of the problem by resolving issues with the current budget. This includes getting a solid understanding of spending, department-by-department. It also involves rectifying mistakes made in past years that affect the current year budget.
- After getting on level ground, the OCFO can then focus its attention on making financial forecasts.

3. Develop budget projections with department and school leaders and create multi-year financial forecasts

- Provide school staff and leaders of central office departments with training in budget development and financial management.
- Develop teams of financial analysts who will work closely with department heads to cost individual strategic initiatives based on best estimates and make budget projections.

- Convene department heads with OCFO analysts to discuss the prioritization and sequencing of initiatives – based in part on the availability of financial resources – and determine unmet funding needs.

D. Develop a tracking system for measuring the success of transformation initiatives

An accountability system is essential to carry out a long term strategy for transforming the school system and improving student achievement. DCPS will develop such a system that enables us to evaluate progress by monitoring key metrics and the accomplishment of interim goals. Importantly, this system will allow for adjustment of the transformation strategy based on changing availability of resources, progress of individual initiatives and effectiveness of programs. The keys to achieving this are the establishment of dedicated program management roles and processes within the Transformation Management Office (TMO) to oversee the transformation effort, and improvements in data systems to assist in tracking initiative progress.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Ongoing strategic initiatives are currently tracked by the SchoolStat accountability program within the Transformation Management Office (TMO). The SchoolStat administrator collects data on key metrics for each initiative, analyzes progress together with initiative owners and generates summary progress reports. Top DCPS leadership meets with strategic initiative owners to discuss progress in rotating weekly meetings, such that each focus area is discussed once a month. SchoolStat has proven to be a valuable tool to drive data-driven decision-making. However, there are several issues that must be addressed to turn it into a high-quality program for managing the transformation:

- Data relating to strategic initiatives is often of poor quality, making assessment of progress and development of corrective action steps difficult.
- There are inadequate processes in place to modify the strategic initiatives based on current progress, resource availability or changes in the strategic vision.
- There are inadequate processes in place to monitor spending on each initiative and link the progress in strategic initiatives with the budget.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Our vision is to create an accountability program and initiative tracking system through which the transformation strategies can be rigorously monitored and updated. These systems will enable proper coordination of the interdependent strategies and resource allocation to ensure success. Achieving this will require evolving the TMO into a program management office that will exist for the life of the transformation plan. The TMO will provide additional management capacity to each department; this is essential to ensure successful implementation of the initiatives, since these activities are above and beyond the day-to-day activities needed to simply operate schools.

The TMO will be responsible for monitoring the progress of each initiative together with individual work stream owners along the dimensions of time, budget and achievement of interim

targets. The TMO will also facilitate identification and resolution of key issues that arise and will support top management target-setting and decision-making in response to the current project status. The SchoolStat accountability program will form the basis of the TMO, but with added responsibilities as well as improved data collection and reporting systems.

The main responsibilities of the TMO are to manage and hold departments accountable for the strategic initiatives. The following is a list of the primary TMO activities:

- *Provide strategic planning capacity:* Coordinate across the organization to map out long term-strategy; ensure high quality measures of success and targets are set – and that they reflect the articulated vision; facilitate organization-wide engagement with and shared understanding of strategic plan
- *Provide forum for senior leadership to communicate re strategic level initiatives.* Ensure alignment with goals, and flag interdependencies
- *Build performance management systems and support their establishment throughout the organization.* Measure progress against strategic and long-term goals and aggregate chief level scorecards. Track progress and drive performance based, goal-driven culture via SchoolStat and initial development of chief and department level scorecards
- *Establish home for cross cutting and fundamental change initiatives.* Incubate high priority strategic initiatives in TMO until they are ready to be infused throughout organization or adopted by an operating team. Coordinate selected cross-cutting and interdependent high priority strategic initiatives

In addition to managing the transformation effort, the TMO will additionally coordinate and develop the accountability systems within each central office department. The TMO will create the processes for evaluating the performance of staff members in each of these departments on everyday activities.

We envision that the TMO will initially play a significant role in aiding data collection, and enforcing accountability in both day-to-day activities and in implementation of strategic initiatives. However, over time the TMO staff will help build these capabilities within each department. After the first two years, the TMO's responsibilities will be limited to those activities that require coordination across several departments or strategic initiatives. At that point, accountability for both day-to-day activities as well as implementation of strategic initiatives will lie within each individual department.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

The first step is finalizing the strategic transformation plan. TMO leadership will meet with department heads and initiative owners to gain consensus on a set of action steps for each initiative of the strategic plan, as well as a set of deliverables and target goals. A consensus will be reached on the definition of performance, and the appropriate metrics and interim indicators will be identified to assess the progress of each initiative. With the strategy initiatives defined, we will then move to develop a high-quality accountability and program management system with the following four initiatives.

1. Establish program management capacity in the TMO to oversee implementation of the transformation initiatives

- DCPS top leadership will work with the TMO to define the responsibilities pertaining to monitoring the transformation initiatives. This will include (but is not limited to) hosting progress review meetings, generating reports for these meetings, continuously updating the strategic initiatives, and performing analyses of initiative progress, interdependencies and budgeting.
- Based on the definition of responsibilities, the TMO will identify specific roles that are needed to manage the transformation. This will likely include a program manager lead that is responsible for managing the overall strategic vision with top DCPS leadership, and program managers responsible for monitoring initiative progress, budgeting and issue identification and resolution.
- Assess the capacity and capability of the current TMO staff to fill these roles and identify staffing needs.
- Reassign current staff to fill these roles and hire new staff where necessary.

2. Improve the quality of data collection and reporting for monitoring the transformation initiatives

- The TMO will work with initiative owners and sponsors to identify collectors of key pieces of data.
- Coordinate with the Office of Data and Accountability to define the method of data collection and the frequency of collection.
- Coordinate with the ODA to retrieve from existing systems data that is necessary to monitor the transformation initiatives.
- Work with the ODA and OCTO to develop a web-accessible portal that displays the overall strategic plan and progress in each initiative. Over time, this portal may also be used by initiative owners to upload data and make adjustments to the strategic plan.

3. Define program management processes by expanding on the current SchoolStat accountability program

While many of the roles of the envisioned TMO are currently captured in SchoolStat, some are missing and some need to be more explicitly defined. Specifically there are no formal processes in place to make modifications to the initiatives when issues arise. Furthermore, there are inadequate processes for coordinating the budget.

- Create a calendar of progress review meetings. In addition to the current SchoolStat meeting, convene additional steering committee meetings to discuss the overall strategic plan, budgeting and issues that arise.
- Create an issue report template to facilitate cataloging issues as they arise, as well as their urgency, importance, and steps required for resolution. The TMO will

maintain this list and will be tasked with coordinating with the appropriate stakeholders to resolve them.

- Create a budget report template to facilitate monitoring of the spending on each initiative compared to the projection.

4. Work with HR to develop accountability systems for central office staff

- Work with DCPS top leadership and department heads to set performance expectations for staff in each central office department and school support service.
- Define quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate performance for each staff member.
- Develop performance scorecards tailored to each position.

TIMELINE FOR CHANGE

For the sequence of specific initiatives within the Effective Central Office focus area, see page 75.

VI. Engaged Community

Education is too important and too big a job for DCPS to handle alone. The success of our overall reform plan depends on the engagement of all important stakeholders. **Students** themselves need to be engaged; without them, no intervention would succeed. **Parents**, if given access to the right information and tools for action, can become powerful advocates for their children's educational welfare. Finally, **community members who can offer time, resources, or dollars to the District**—including individuals, businesses, and other organizations—can provide the direct support necessary to realize DCPS' most ambitious goals.

To date, DCPS has not acted to engage these three groups in a coherent way. As a result, to a large extent, stakeholders are either not engaged with DCPS, or not engaged productively.

For example, parents, for the most part, do not have the information they need to be positively involved in the school system. Instead, they often view DCPS with suspicion and mistrust. In turn, DCPS staff can be mistrustful of parents and can fail to see them for what they are and can be—the primary directors of their children's education.

Similarly, although DCPS has the extreme good fortune to be located in one of the most culturally interesting and politically significant cities in the nation, to date we have failed to take full advantage of what DC as a city has to offer. Part of the reason for this failure is that it is just as difficult for organizations to navigate through the system as it is for parents. A well-intentioned institution with resources and a purpose that is looking to partner with a school may find it impossible to identify the right authorities to talk to, or may find that the administrative requirements (applications, screening) are too onerous. On DCPS' part, we have failed to articulate how partner institutions will play a productive role in increasing student achievement.

To realize its aspirations for the proper servicing and support of these groups, DCPS has created two new offices to address much of its engagement efforts – the Office of Community Partnerships and the Office of Family and Community Engagement. Below we will describe our clear aspirations and the myriad ways that DCPS will work to achieve those aspirations.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO: THE PRODUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN DCPS

Of the many groups that have an interest in DCPS (including staff representatives, the press, lawmakers), student, parents, and community partners likely have the greatest potential to most directly, and positively, impact student achievement. Set out below is what DCPS believes that productive engagement looks like, and what achieving it requires from the DCPS community:

The stakeholder...	...should play the role of...	...which requires...
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An excited, productive member of a learning community • The director of his or her own academic career (by having interests and expressing them) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the importance of academic success • Confidence that he or she can succeed academically • Knowledge of the resources available to him or her to support achievement
Parents and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocates for their child's needs within schools • Agents for "quality control" within the school portfolio • Advocates for public school system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of how DCPS "works" • Knowledge of the most important milestones of their child's academic career (e.g., standardized tests, high school course enrollment) • Access to information on school performance
Broader community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider of services and funding for special projects • Supplier of additional adult role models and mentors for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An awareness that the entire community—even non-parents and businesses—benefits from high student achievement • Many opportunities to easily "get involved"

When all parties have what they need to play their ideal roles, the ability of the system to increase student achievement is multiplied many times over.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

In order to achieve the vision of a system in which all stakeholders are productively engaged with DCPS, we are pursuing a set of initiatives that address each stakeholder group.

A. Increase students' engagement in their own academic success

A school system that serves students effectively knows how to motivate and engage them toward higher levels of achievement each year. Quality instruction includes setting clear expectations that send a message that high achievement is not only possible but expected.

As our data systems improve, teachers will be able to give clear and ongoing feedback to students and parents about student progress. As a district, we will examine the incentives acting on our students, increase what works and weed out what does not. As we create a college-going culture across DCPS, students will be engaged and informed about the opportunities available to them and the steps they must take in order pursue those opportunities.

Specifically, we will:

- 1) *Offer academic options that match students' interests*
- 2) *Increase the use of Student Support Teams as an academic intervention to provide learning support to students*
- 3) *Expand the scope of the Chancellor's student cabinet*

B. Share information with parents and prepare them to advocate effectively for their children's educational interests

It is well understood that all parents want what is best for their children. Equally clear is the fact that not all parents have the knowledge and/or capacity to champion effectively their children's interests. DCPS' charge is to provide parents with the resources, tools and information they need to partner with their students and schools for academic success.

DCPS recognizes that to realize these goals, it has a responsibility to respect and communicate with parents. In addition, DCPS recognizes that its schools must be transformed into welcoming environments that encourage the full and active participation of parents. To this end, DCPS will establish a high degree of accountability for teachers and principals to establish and maintain sound practices for parent communication and involvement. Performance metrics for teachers and principals will include effective parent communication methods and satisfaction levels.

While it is the shared responsibility of all DCPS departments to support parental involvement, the Office of Family and Community Engagement is a key driver of these efforts.

1) Conduct community meetings/hearings/listening and information sessions for parents and community members

Community meetings (of various types) will be a means by which DCPS provides information to, and receives input from, families and other community members. Although most of the other initiatives in this focus area are intended to provide information to the broader community, it is vital that the lines of communication operate in both directions.

Critical to the success of these events is thoughtfully planning them to foster exchange that is meaningful and not merely ceremonial or perfunctory. This means carefully selecting those issues that are appropriate, arranging venues to accommodate the public, publicizing the events sufficiently, and devising tools to faithfully capture feedback. It also is important to devise ways to communicate decisions and outcomes back out to the community.

2) Enhance and expand stand-alone Parent Resource Centers and school-based resource centers

DCPS currently operates three Parent Resource Centers (PRCs). To the extent feasible, we will open additional PRCs and support the creation of similar but smaller school-based resource centers (SBRCs) across the City. PRCs and SBRCs are intended to serve as "one-stop shops" for parents, offering critical information about how DCPS operates, curriculum and standards, assessments and how to engage effectively with schools, as well as providing a space for parents to meet and receive services and programs. For example, DCPS could partner with community-based organizations to offer an adult literacy program, computer-skills training or GED classes at the PRCs. DCPS also will partner with other district government agencies such as the Department of Mental Health, Parks and Recreation and Employment Services to provide necessary information and resources to parents. Community meetings also could take place there, and in the absence of an organized program, parents should be able to stop by to find information like school performance report cards, graduation requirements, or applications for out-of-boundary enrollment.

3) Expand the number and role of parent coordinators within schools

A key ingredient necessary for effective parental engagement is the availability of well-trained and properly supported parent coordinators within the schools. These parent coordinators perform an important function by addressing school-family issues, identifying resources and

resolving individual questions and problems. Simply by increasing the number of these parent coordinators, DCPS can enhance significantly its capacity to interact productively with parents.

The parent coordinators also can play a more proactive role. For example, part of this overall plan is to catalyze parent advocacy efforts (initiative C5). Parent coordinators can serve as the primary means through which DCPS mobilizes parents to advocate for positive educational change.

4) Provide information for creation of NCLB-required Parental Involvement Policies (PIP)

The federal government requires districts that receive Title I funds to create, jointly with parents in that district, a PIP that details how the district will:

- Involve parents in developing district school improvement plans.
- Offer technical assistance and coordination to help schools plan parent involvement activities to improve student and school academic performance.
- Build school and parent capacities for strong parent involvement.
- Coordinate and integrate parent involvement strategies with other programs, such as Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, Parents as Teachers, Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, and limited English proficiency programs.
- Annually evaluate with parents the effectiveness of the policy in academically improving district schools. The evaluation must include identification of barriers to parent involvement, especially barriers to parents who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or belong to a racial or ethnic minority.

5) Identify and make available a series of information sessions & trainings for parents and community

This represents the direct outreach efforts that complement the initiatives above, and will be undertaken in coordination (e.g., DCPS may use PRCs as a venue to hold information sessions). Trainings will be offered for the key skills necessary to direct a child's academic path and will involve community partners to provide facilitation and content (community partnerships are described more fully below).

As these information sessions and trainings grow in scope and number, DCPS may, in collaboration with other community-based organizations committed to parental engagement, use them as the foundation for a "Parent Academy" for advocacy education, adult literacy, parenting skills, and other skills. The Parent Academy would be a more formalized series of programs through which a parent could be exposed to the full set of basic skills necessary to be a successful participant in their child's education. These skills also would be useful beyond what is necessary to interact with the district; ideally the Academy offerings could benefit parents in other aspects of their lives.

C. Effective communication tools and outreach

The initiatives and efforts outlined above are guided by the simple idea that DCPS must provide parents with a clear understanding of what a quality education looks like. Too many of our students' parents are uninformed consumers of public education who blindly support the District's public schools without full knowledge of the significant deficiencies of the schools they champion. DCPS believes that if it effectively arms parents with the knowledge and tools they need to understand what a quality education looks like, they would demand action and accountability. Through the coordination of community meetings and hearings on issues and matters relevant to our students and our schools, the provision of the workshops and trainings outlined above, the creation of meaningful opportunities for parents and community members to participate in decision-making, and the revitalization of school-based parental advocacy organizations such as the Local School Restructuring Teams and Parent-Teacher organizations, we will involve and empower parents in our efforts to advance widespread improvement of D.C. public schools. In five years, we expect parents to be among the first to clamor for change in low-performing schools.

- 1) *Create a database of parents, school leaders, community members and community organizations to facilitate dissemination of information & solicitation of input*

As the other initiatives in this focus area are pursued, the Engagement office will keep track of parents, educators and community leaders who are actively involved in promoting the success of the district. This database is a web-based tool that is capable of tracking and sorting parents across multiple characteristics and interests. If appropriate, this database can be worked into the Data-Driven Decisions plan for a broader IT infrastructure as a more formalized resource that staff members across DCPS can access.

- 2) *Disseminate, publish and make available relevant school-, DCPS- and learning-focused information and resources for parents and community*

This initiative represents the efforts aimed at creating multiple ways to offer well-crafted information to parents that is written in language that is understandable and clear. The media would include PRCs and the sessions described above, as well as: DCPS newsletters, blogs, an enhanced DCPS website, and other offerings. Another key component of the communication effort is the identification of community-based organizations, non-profits, other government agencies, and private entities that serve our parents, and using those organizations as communications outlets for the dissemination – through whatever tools and vehicles such organizations have available – of DCPS provided news and information. DCPS has already initiated this work and is compiling a database of such outlets. It is a priority to provide clear information on major transformation issues (e.g., the closing of schools) in addition to day-to-day information on how schools are running.

- 3) *Work with the Mayor's office and OCTO to introduce the city's correspondence tracking system, IQ*

DC already uses the IQ system to ensure that interactions with citizens (including, for example, complaints) are tracked and issues closed. This system also can be used as a source of data for measuring progress in parent engagement efforts. For example, as DCPS' engagement efforts hit full stride, the number of complaints should go down and other types of interaction may increase in number.

- 4) *Reinstitute DC STARS reporting and Implement Parent Assistant Module for DC STARS*

DC STARS was originally implemented in 2005 and was intended, among other purposes, to provide reports on student achievement (using metrics like grades, attendance, drop-outs, and test scores). However, there were problems with its implementation that prevented it from being fully functional. The new incarnation of DC STARS, with those problems fixed, can form the foundation of the IT required to make performance data available to parents. Much of this work is detailed in the Data-Driven Decisions plan; in addition to the IT work, DCPS will seek to create training for parents (offered through PRCs, for example) to help them learn how to interpret reports.

5) Launch effort to organize parental advocacy efforts

School-based parent groups historically have served an important role in galvanizing parental support for important initiatives and efforts within the school. DCPS will work with them as well as community-based organizations to support the creation and effective operation of parent-teacher organizations that will serve as additional bases from which parental advocacy efforts can be organized. Key to the success of these efforts is to ensure that parents receive proper guidance and instruction on, among other topics, how to identify and engage key stakeholders, how to conduct an effective meeting, and how to communicate effectively and persuasively. Trainings and workshops on this topic will be offered in the PRCs and the SBRCs.

D. Pursue partnerships with businesses and community organizations

Community organizations and nonprofits bring passion, resources and specialty programs to public schools. We will open the door for these groups as well as the business community to play a role in the ongoing effort to expand educational options for all students. We will look for ways to integrate the excelling groups and give them an opportunity to grow their programs and initiatives to scale. The Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) will match schools with partnership opportunities and maximize the impact that partners make on student achievement.

Currently, partnerships are:

- Not cataloged by DCPS
- Liable to be concentrated in certain areas or schools
- Unaware of the proper policies or protocols governing school partnerships
- Not always providing activities aligned with the needs of the district

The Office of Community Partnerships has begun the work to address these and other issues.

1) Identify partners and match schools with partnership opportunities in a way that maximizes the impact that partners achieve on the overall goals of the district

A principal challenge to the effective operation of OCP is the lack of a centralized directory of all of the partners that work in DCPS schools. Early this Spring, OCP worked collaboratively with school staff and community-based organizations to “map” or identify all DCPS partners and the schools they serve. That initiative now complete, DCPS has the information necessary to identify gaps in services and implement ways to deploy and utilize partners more effectively in under-served schools across the District.

2) Organize partners into collaborative groups with a lead partner for each group

DCPS will use a “hub” model to coordinate the numerous partners throughout the district. For example, currently the DC Arts and Humanities collaborative, a private 501(c)(3), works to coordinate almost all arts activity in the schools. DCPS would like to establish similar “hubs” for other types of organizations, such as business, international interests, and Out of School Time programming. These hubs would help organizations distribute themselves across schools, would facilitate contact with school administration, and would in some cases provide the supplemental funding schools need in order to take advantage of partnership offers (e.g., the transportation needed to take advantage of free theater tickets).

3) *Manage the processing and participation of volunteers*

The current volunteer process is cumbersome and time intensive. Paper-based, it requires prospective volunteers to travel to DCPS to submit the application for processing. DCPS is collaborating with Serve DC and Greater DC Cares to create an online portal that will create a more user-friendly process that also will allow candidates to explore a menu of existing volunteer opportunities; our current system requires a labor-intensive individual matching of candidates to available opportunities.

4) *Implement measurement systems for existing and new partnerships*

Currently there are numerous external partners working to raise student achievement in our schools. However, there is currently no clear system to measure whether their work is linked to student achievement. When a school improves or declines in a year-long period, we have no quantifiable way of understanding the impact of the resources provided by our external partners. We will create a system that measures the effect of these additional resources, and use that data to build upon the work of successful partners, and end relationships with ineffective partners.

TIMELINE FOR CHANGE

For the sequence of specific initiatives with the Engaged Community focus area, see page 77.

APPENDICES:

WORKPLANS BY FOCUS AREA

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS OVERALL

Ultimately we are trying to achieve two things:

1. Build the highest-performing urban school district in the country
2. Close the achievement gap

To measure our progress toward those overarching goals, we are proposing the following system-wide student achievement outcome measures:

- DC-CAS reading, math, and writing assessment scores (3 through 8)
- Achievement gap on DC-CAS
- Proportion of schools making AYP
- High school graduation rate
- Enrollment in college and 5-year college graduation rates

Within each of the Focus Areas, we have proposed a focused set of metrics to track our progress. These are noted in the workplans below.

Focus Area: COMPELLING SCHOOLS

Summary

End State

We will create schools that provide a consistent foundation in academics, strong support for social/emotional needs and a variety of challenging themes and programs. Over the next 5 years, we will build a diverse portfolio of high-performing schools that serve the needs of all of our students and attract families with a diverse set of compelling programs. To deploy more resources directly to classrooms where they can make a difference, we will close under-enrolled schools. Chronically failing schools will be dramatically improved through a variety of interventions, and all schools will offer a full complement of academic and enrichment programs and wrap-around services.

Major Workstreams (Owners)

Enhance the quality of our school portfolio (Office of Schools, Office of Portfolio Management)

Ensure accountability for school performance (Office of Data and Accountability)

Make school environments safe, modern, and conducive to learning (Office of Student Support Services, Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization, Office of School Security)

Expand our ability to meet special-education needs (Office of Special Education)

Measures of Success

Student enrollment

Ward-level accessibility to a diverse range of programs

Teacher, parent and student assessments of school conditions (safety, culture and climate, facilities)

State-reportable incidents/disciplinary actions

Spending on special education private placements

Number of schools demonstrating positive gains on DC-CAS

Focus Area: COMPELLING SCHOOLS

Work Stream	Milestones				
	*SY (School Year) = July — July				
	SY1* 2008-09	SY2 2009-10	SY3 2010-11	SY4 2011-12	SY5 2012-13
Enhance the quality of our school portfolio [Chief Academic Officer, Office of Portfolio Management]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact continuous improvement at high-performing schools • Reconstitute second round of schools, based on Quality School Review (QSR) • Phase II implementation at 3 partnership high schools • Roll out theme schools, phased in by grade level • Partial implementation of extracurricular plan • Open additional HS Saturday Academy • Invite high-performing schools to apply for autonomous status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute improvements based on QSR and school report card audits • Expand implementation of theme programs • Full implementation of extracurricular plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute improvements based on QSR and school report card audits 	
Ensure accountability for performance [Office of Data and Accountability and Chief Academic Officer]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further expand QSR to additional schools • Announce range of rewards and consequences of school report card results that will go into effect no sooner than SY 3 • Roll out “medium-stakes” report card • Collect feedback and undertake revision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand QSR to every school • Roll out “high-stakes” report card • Announce rewards and consequences for schools based on 2 years of report card results • Engage schools with low grades in aggressive improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penalize persistently low performance, with possibility of closure 	

Work Stream	Milestones				
	*SY (School Year) = July — July				
	SY1* 2008-09	SY2 2009-10	SY3 2010-11	SY4 2011-12	SY5 2012-13
Increase student engagement in their academic success, and deliver non-academic supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand scope of Chancellor's Student Cabinet • Based on results of year one assessment of Capital Gains, refine implementation and consider expansion • Consider expansion of ICSIC programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	
Expand our ability to meet special-education needs	See 08/09 performance plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify seats in DCPS schools that can effectively meet the needs of students currently in private placements, and work with families who are interested in returning • Consider expansion of the SAM and Full Service School models to additional schools • Establish excellent supports and training opportunities for teachers • Develop capacity in schools to use Response to Intervention approach to prevent over-identification of special education students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch world class autism programs • Complete compliance with the Blackman-Jones consent decree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More inclusion for more students • Higher achievement for students with disabilities 	

Focus Area: GREAT PEOPLE

Summary

End State

Retain the most highly effective and highly compensated educators in the country. In today's DCPS, high-performing employees are unrecognized and unrewarded, and poor performers face no real consequences. We will build a system that identifies, hires, develops, and rewards passionate and effective people – teachers, principals, and administrators. We will also hold every school employee accountable for performing his/her duties competently.

Major Workstreams (Owners)

Dramatically improve teacher recruitment, professional development, and compensation (Human Resources; Office of Professional Development)
Dramatically improve principal recruitment, professional development, and compensation (Human Resources; Office of Professional Development)
Dramatically improve central office staff recruitment, professional development and compensation (Human Resources)

Measures of Success

Teacher, principal and central office/ administrator application and selectivity rates
Teacher, principal and central office/ administrator unplanned attrition rates
Unfilled positions on day 1 of school
Qualitative assessments of teachers and principals

Focus Area: GREAT PEOPLE

Work Stream	Milestones				
	*SY (School Year) = July - July				
	SY1* 2008-09	SY2 2009-10	SY3 2010-11	SY4 2011-12	SY5 2012-13
Dramatically improve teacher recruitment, professional development, and compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training around PFP system for teachers and principals • Define formal career ladder options for high-performing teachers • Bolster induction programs and PD focused on improving instruction • Transition additional teachers into PFP • Determine performance pay status • Administer new teacher evaluation instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out teacher career ladder options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implement career ladder 	
Dramatically improve principal recruitment, professional development, and compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define career ladder options for high-performing principals • Enhance PD to focus on instructional leadership and data usage for instruction • Add more cohorts to School Leadership Academy (turnaround, high/ low performers) • Implement new principal contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out career ladder • Distribute performance bonuses for principals, independent of TEAM awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implement career ladder 	
Dramatically improve central office staff recruitment, professional development, and compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide focused PD in performance management for all central office managers • Launch limited pay-for-performance system • Standardize and align job descriptions and compensation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine performance management system; create skills matrix for development 		

Focus Area: ALIGNED CURRICULUM

Summary

End State

Implement a rigorous, relevant, college preparatory curriculum that gives all students meaningful options for life. DCPS has not taken seriously enough its responsibility to help students build the basic skills that form the foundation for productive lives, let alone to challenge every student to achieve to his or her full potential. Going forward, we will set clear content standards for student achievement and align our curriculum, instructional materials and approach, use of data, and professional development toward common educational goals. Everyone in the system, including teachers, students, and parents, will know what those goals are and what their role is in helping us reach them.

Major Workstreams (Owners)

Create tools to translate content standards into instruction, and align instructional methods with them [Office of Chief Academic Officer]
Refine student assessments so they map directly to the standards [Office of Chief Academic Officer]
Use data to inform instruction [Office of Data and Accountability, Office of Professional Development]
Develop shared understanding of how to measure performance across the district [Office of Data and Accountability, Office of the Chief Academic Officer]

Measures of Success

DIBELS reading assessment scores (K-3)
Students taking AP or IB courses
Student test scores on AP and IB exams
Surveys of teachers on quality of school level coaching

Focus Area: ALIGNED CURRICULUM

Work Stream	Milestones				
	*SY (School Year) = July – July				
	SY1* 2008-09	SY2 2009-10	SY3 2010-11	SY4 2011-12	SY5 2012-13
Support instructional alignment to content standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train Skillful Teacher delivery team Pilot Skillful Teacher with cohorts of coaches Expand anchor assignments to additional MS and HS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Skillful Teacher course to additional schools, targeting second year teachers Expand anchor assignments to all MS and HS Pilot anchor assignments at elementary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All second year teachers engage in Skillful Teacher course as part of extended induction Expand anchor assignments to additional ES 	
Refine student assessments so they map directly to the standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and share rubrics to standardize assessment of daily student work Implement electronic report cards Expand end-of-course tests to additional courses at the secondary level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand end-of-course tests to additional courses at secondary level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand end-of-course tests to all core academic courses at secondary level 	
Use data to inform instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make available tactical data on student achievement to teachers and train them to adjust their day-to-day practices based on data Continue to improve implementation and effectiveness of DC-BAS Roll out protocols for looking at student work using Data Wise process. Expand data leads to additional schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand data leads program to all schools 		

Focus Area: DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Summary

End State

Support decision-making with accurate information about how our students are performing and how the district as a whole is performing. We have not used data on student performance to determine whether our students are learning and how best to help them. This is going to change. We will create a data culture supported by dramatically upgraded data collection and analysis, and we will use facts about student achievement in making decisions about where to put our resources and how to manage our staff.

Major Workstreams (Owners)

Design and implement a coherent, clear accountability system [Office of Data and Accountability]

Place high-quality information at the fingertips of the DCPS community [Office of Data and Accountability]

Provide supports to transform data into actionable information [Office of Teaching and Learning, Office of Professional Development]

Measures of Success

Schools maintaining and reporting high quality, electronic student information (grades, attendance)

Percent of teachers who are regular users of online student information systems

Number of parents using parent module of DC STARS (student information system)

Focus Area: DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Work Stream	Milestones				
	*SY (School Year) = July – July				
	SY1* 2008-9	SY2 2009-10	SY3 2010-11	SY4 2011-12	SY5 2012-13
Place high-quality information at the fingertips of the DCPS community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide intensive PD to teachers to increase use of DC STARS • Continue to upgrade IT infrastructure at schools to enable educators to access data system • Expand Parent Assistant module to additional schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch first phase of data mart to integrate the student, HR and finance data systems • Continue to upgrade IT infrastructure at schools to enable educators to access data system • Expand Parent Assistant module to all schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the data mart to include data systems from other central office and school-based services • Continue to upgrade IT infrastructure at schools to enable educators to access data system 	
Provide supports to transform data into actionable information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand roll out of Teacher Assistant module in DC STARS to remaining HS and at MS • Expand internal research and analysis efforts • Expand collaborations with external researchers • Hire additional data analysts within the Office of Data and Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess data needs and improve upon systems as necessary • Expand Teacher Assistant module to elementary schools 		
Use data to inform instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make available tactical data on student achievement to teachers and train them to adjust their day-to-day practices based on data • Continue to improve implementation and effectiveness of DC-BAS • Roll out protocols for looking at student work using Data Wise process. • Expand data leads to additional schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand data leads program to all schools 		

Focus Area: EFFECTIVE CENTRAL OFFICE

Summary

End State

Central office functions – provide schools with support they need to operate effectively. Too often the central office has operated as though schools were there to serve it, rather than the other way around. The procurement is inefficient and opaque, budgeting procedures are unclear and unmonitored, food service loses money and provides low-quality meals. Moving forward, the central office will deliver on its sole duty of efficiently providing schools with the services they need to operate, and teachers and students will be able to devote their time and energy to teaching and learning – the things that truly matter.

Major Workstreams (Owners)

- Improve efficiency and reduce costs in procurement [Office of Contracts and Acquisitions, Office of the Chief Financial Officer]
- Enhance the efficiency of Food Services and the quality of meals [Food Services]
- Bring more discipline and structure to financial planning [Office of the Chief Financial Officer]
- Develop a performance tracking system for the transformation initiatives [Transformation Management Office]

Measures of Success

- Procurement: on-time deliveries (e.g., % of schools with textbooks on day 1), total number of suppliers, customer satisfaction
- Food service: FRL reporting compliance, customer satisfaction surveys
- Financial planning: timeliness of budget submissions

Focus Area: EFFECTIVE CENTRAL OFFICE

Work Stream	Milestones				
	*SY (School Year) = July – July				
	SY1* 2008-09	SY2 2009-10	SY3 2010-11	SY4 2011-12	SY5 2012-13
Improve efficiency and reduce costs in procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggregate spend to lower costs • Develop sourcing strategies for individual supplies and services • Increase automation of processes to reduce lead times • Help customers develop spending plans and create a customer service desk 			
Enhance the efficiency of Food Services and the quality of meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Provision II in schools • Launch informational campaign about FRPL 			
Bring more discipline and structure to financial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to upgrade the HR payroll system 			
Develop a performance tracking system for the transformation initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement web access portal for monitoring transformation initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update strategic initiatives and analyze initiative progress, budgeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update strategic initiatives and analyze initiative progress, budgeting 	

Focus Area: ENGAGED COMMUNITY

Summary

End State

Partner with families and community members who demand better schools. Historically, the DCPS organization has given priority to the interests of just about everyone but students and their parents – teachers, administrators, contractors, and elected officials have usually come first. We will clarify the shared responsibility of parents, students, and the community in increasing student achievement, and we will enhance our efforts to engage important stakeholders in making our schools successful.

Major Workstreams (Owners)

- Increase student engagement in their academic success, and deliver non-academic supports
- Build trust and mutual respect between DCPS and the families it serves
- Share information and equip parents to advocate for their children's success
- Pursue partnerships with businesses and community organizations

Measures of Success

- Parent and partner satisfaction surveys
- Parent-teacher conference attendance
- Usage of website by parents
- Surveys of parent/student understanding of key academic info

Focus Area: ENGAGED COMMUNITY

Work Stream	Milestones				
	*SY (School Year) = July – July				
	SY1* 2008-09	SY2 2009-10	SY3 2010-11	SY4 2011-12	SY5 2012-13
Build trust and mutual respect between DCPS and the families it serves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand program offerings at Parent Resource Centers • Assess use and effectiveness of PRC and determine plans for possible expansion 			
Share information and equip parents to advocate for their children's success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue training for parents on Parent Assistant Module of DC STARS, as implementation expands to additional schools • Provide support to LSRTs or equivalent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue training for parents on Parent Assistant Module of DC STARS, as implementation expands to additional schools 		
Pursue partnerships with business and community organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 08/09 performance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with local universities for programs • Implement measurement systems for new and existing partnerships • Expand hub structure as necessary • Create online portal for volunteer applications 			

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